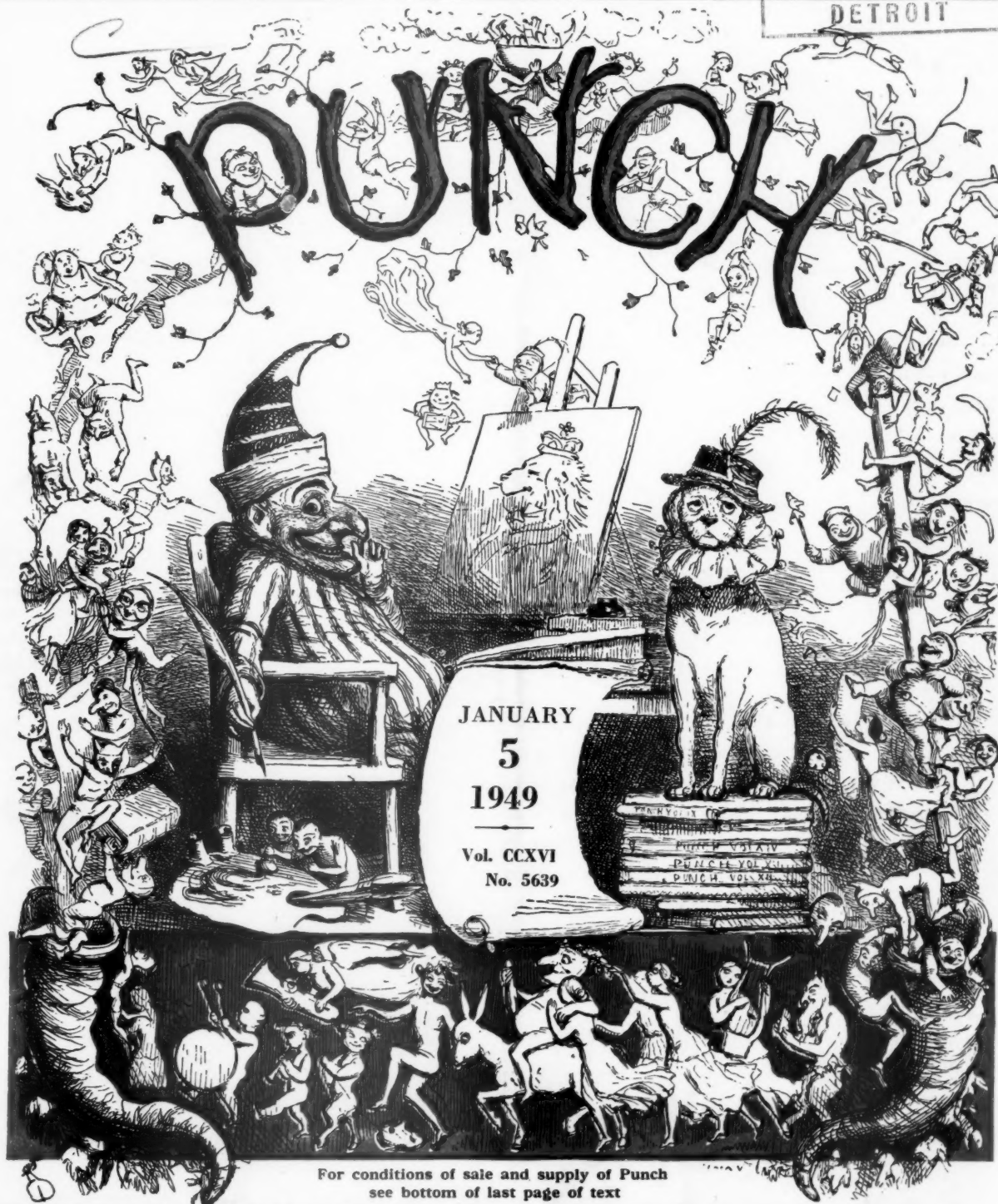


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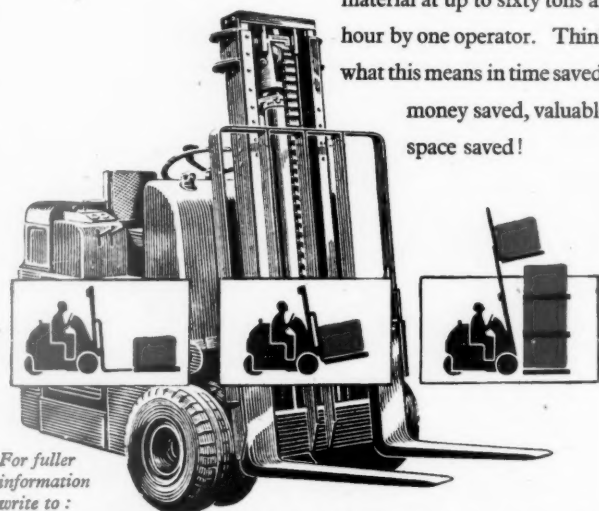
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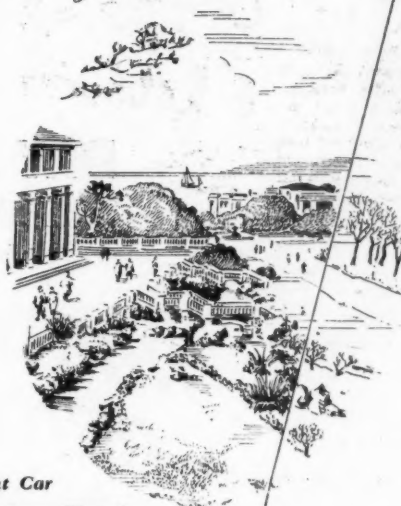


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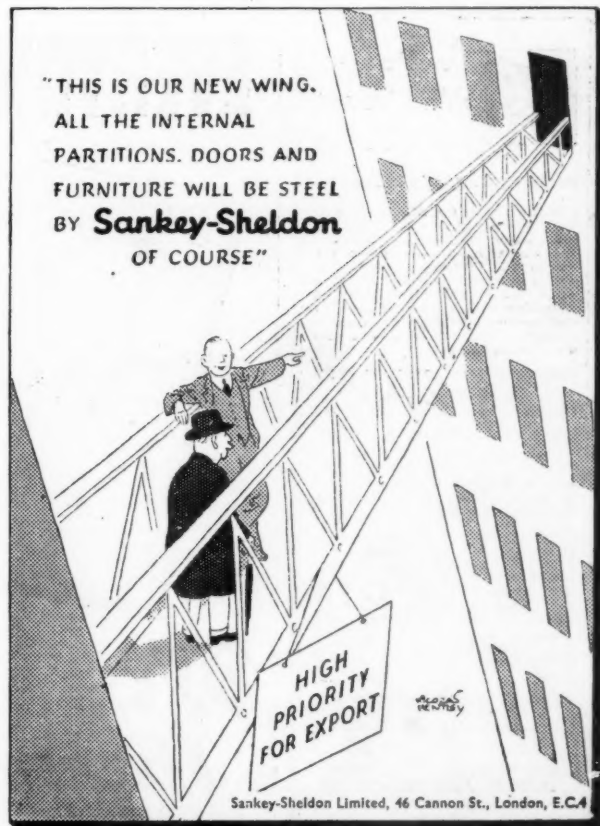
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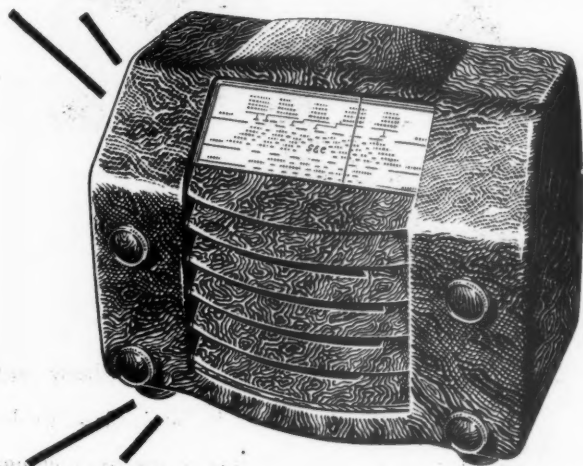
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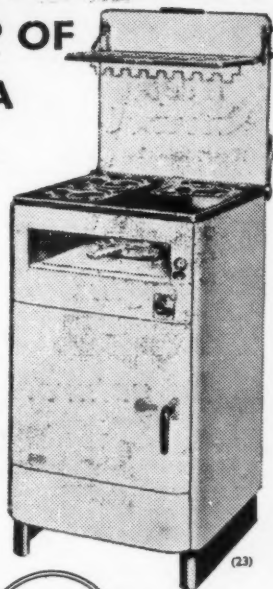
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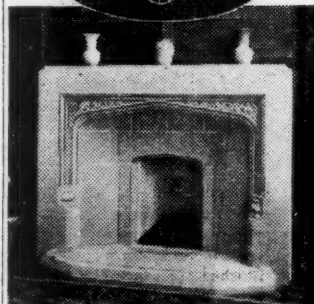
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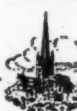


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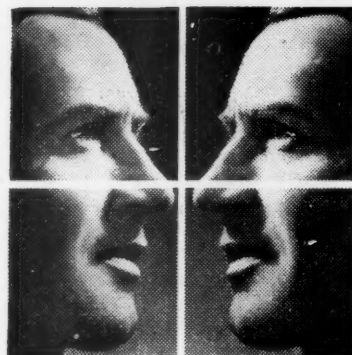
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The Cup

BAGSHAW pointed to a large and handsome silver cup that stands on a high shelf in Sympson's sitting-room.

"Simpson won that playing golf in nineteen-thirty-two," he said. "South-Eastern Amateur Championship, I think it was. His game must have deteriorated a lot since those days."

Our host had deserted us for a few minutes to go round to the off-licence for another bottle of gin, his cocktail-party guests having been thirstier than he had hoped, so we gathered round Bagshaw and admired the cup.

"I think you must have misunderstood him," said Enderby, who has probably known Sympson longer than any of us. "The cup is a relic of his schooldays. I clearly remember him telling me that he gained it by winning the school marathon three years in succession. One can't somehow picture Sympson as a long-distance runner, but I expect he was a good deal slimmer in those days. He told me that he was only fifteen when he gained his first victory, the youngest boy to do it in the history of the school."

"It must be some other cup you're

thinking of," said Entwistle. "Because it is less than a fortnight since I heard the whole history of this one from Sympson's own lips. I happened to mention to him that the Munton cricket club were going to give me a cup for topping the batting and bowling averages this year, and he said that, curiously enough, he had gained that particular cup for a similar feat, when he used to play for Little Wobbley before the war. He told me his figures, and they were quite remarkable. Ninety-two wickets at three point four runs apiece, and a batting average of sixty-four. That is very high indeed for village cricket, and Sympson admitted that he had never approached those figures since."

Brigadier Hogg chuckled.

"Simpson was pulling your leg about the cricket," he said. "I was captain of the Little Wobbley team in the pre-war years, and Sympson certainly wasn't presented with a cup. His batting average was about three point four, and during his best season I think he took one wicket for sixty-four. The fact is that he won the cup in a waltz competition at Blackpool. Seeing

him lumbering round a dance-floor in these days like an elephant with a wooden leg I admit it doesn't seem likely, but he was a keen dancer in his younger days."

Several people then began to speak at once. Johnson-Clitheroe remembered clearly being told by Sympson that he had won the cup at water-polo, while Cursitor knew for a fact that it had been presented to him when he took the singles of the Barsetshire tennis finals in 1929 by beating Borotra in three straight sets.

Personally I knew that they were all wrong. Many times Sympson had told me that he won the cup, by a great bit of luck, in a bowls competition at Taunton just before the war.

I stood on a chair and lifted the cup down so that I could show them the inscription, and at that moment Sympson came back into the room carrying a bottle of gin. When he saw what we were doing he looked very embarrassed, but he was too late to stop us reading the inscription. He had actually been awarded the cup in 1907 by virtue of being Brighchester's Bonniest Baby.

D. H. B.

More Reflections

ONCE again my readers have embarked on another New Year, an occasion no writer of any article with this title likes to miss; and what I want to say this time is something about the average New Year's Eve. The fallacy that on the night of December the thirty-first people dress in their best clothes and crowd into other people's houses to throw streamers and raise champagne-shaped glasses is—as I have suggested—a fallacy. What an awful lot of them do is either go to bed as usual or sit by their fires with part of a bottle saved naggingly from Christmas, and I have made even this picture more festive than it often is by leaving out the laundry-work from which members of many households are fetched at five to twelve. But, however it is celebrated, New Year's Eve is a time for thinking back, a time when people like to highlight the surprises of the past twelve months by telling each other that a year ago they never thought that whatever has happened would have. I need not dwell on the very well-known fact that we are all much more like what we were last New Year's Eve than we expected then, but it might be worth mentioning that the wireless is in a funny way held to be actually responsible for the occasion it is so keenly recording.

MY next reflection, also fairly topical, is on the cut-out model. This is not nearly so universal an experience as the New Year, but the recent revival of toy theatres and the permanent undercurrent of little dogs with a bent-back tab to make them sit up before falling down renders it likely that in the last few weeks many of my readers have been helping to stick paper to cardboard that is too thick to bend properly. Very thick cardboard bends or rather tears into independent jags, but most of us know this by instinct; it is the stuff that looks thin until you try it that turns model-making into a struggle in the cause of art and the feelings of those who are not going to waste the makings of a good dog or theatre or (in these progressive days) a flat-roofed bungalow.

One of the snags of sticking paper to cardboard is the occasional irrevocable pleat; another is the glue. Glue may be defined as what comes out of a glue-tube sideways suddenly, but I think it cannot better be summed up than as glue. Towards the end of a piece of model-making, when every corner has been bent back and every tab stuck to something, glue reaches its climax and so do the people holding down the tabs they have been ordered to man. The climax of the whole thing is of course the moment when the model is pronounced finished, when no section springs away from any other and the result, an object of at least three dimensions (I am ignoring simple models like sitting-up dogs), is stood up away from the mess and looked at. There is a special way of looking at something clever we have made (near off, far away, and whenever we come into the room) which, as my readers know, is one of the pleasures of construction.

By no means all my readers have been helping with cut-out models lately; some have been reading aloud from new little books about squirrels and other animals, and I should like to say a word about these books, to which readers-aloud have an attitude called forth by no other books. I don't think any other literature gets quite the same expressive interpretation, the same abandon in the range of voice, the same amplifying asides—where, except with Shakespeare commentators and then not nearly so spontaneously, do you get those divings-off into a character's past life or what he might have had for breakfast?—

or anything like the same success with illustrations. There is a special technique for making the most of these when reading aloud; it consists of nothing more than turning the page that precedes one of them and getting the story lost in the avalanche of recognition.

EARLIER in this article I was talking about people not going to parties. Now let us take some of the occasions when they do and are getting ready. There is a well-known stage in this process when someone in the bath is being shouted at about a collar. Collar-wearers are extraordinarily apt to turn a whole drawer out because the expected collar is not there, but the collar-minders among my readers are very well aware that this is one of life's phenomena and the collar was there all the time, unless of course it has been taken out and put somewhere easy to find. These same readers, the ones who do their hair rather than tidy it, will also know that the hair-doing marks the stage when they begin to look like what they hope to; while all my readers will remember how they feel when, having got themselves finally fixed up, they are seen and remarked on.

I don't expect I am under-estimating my readers' sophistication when I say that, for all their offhand reaction to the rather unnecessary admiration that they would be awfully hurt not to get in full force, they would be the first to admit that they are looking totally unlike ordinary life. Psychologists tell us that all people really got up for a party think they are dazzlingly conspicuous; or, rather, not exactly thinking it (for they are sensible enough to realize, anyway afterwards, the levelling effect of a crowd of people thinking the same), but simply acknowledging the obvious fact in the looking-glass.

ANDE.

Pro Bono Publico

QUOTIENS revisito Publicum Locale,
tædiorum liquidans onus diurnale,
spero dis volentibus fore sempiternam
decus illud patriæ, Anglicam Tabernam.

* * * * *

Thomas hic cum Harrio sedet et Richardus
donec "Tempus, domini!" clamet caupo tardus;
fundimusque innoxii lepidos sermones,
temperantes sobrias risu potiones.

* * * * *

hic jactando spiculo delectamur, namque
artis est ballisticæ, mathematicamque
promovet scientiam proletariorum.
conservemus liberum ludum spiculatorum!

* * * * *

tu severum oppidis novis regimentum
vel Carliolensium das Experimentum,
teetotalitarie Domus-Secretari?
Ede, bibe; cras erit tempus suffragari!

* * * * *

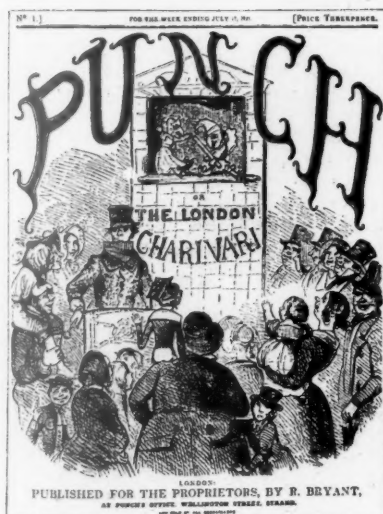
cives, congregamini, poculum levantes
et pro Bono Publico fortiter cantantes
quoad vim sufficient guttura et nervi:
"Numquam numquam Britones numquam erunt servi!"



THE TROUBLES OF TITO

"I am the Evil Demon Russia;
I mean to holdyer and to crushyer."

"I am the Spirit of the West;
My fairy wand will make you blest."



July 17 1841
Designed by A. S. Henning

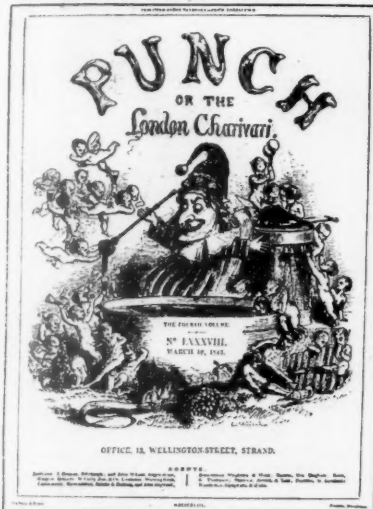


January 1842
Designed by Hablot Knight Browne ("Phiz")



July 1842
Designed by William Harvey

OF THE WEEKLY PUNCHER, as well as the Monthly Parts, may be had of all Booksellers & News-vendors, and a STAMPED EDITION, to send free by post, in due publication, price 4d.



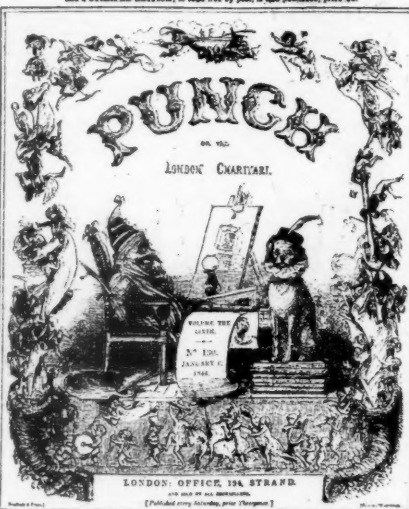
January 1843
Designed by Sir John Gilbert

OF THE WEEKLY PUNCHER, as well as the Monthly Parts, may be had of all Booksellers & News-vendors, and a STAMPED EDITION, to send free by post, in due publication, price 4d.



July 1843
Designed by Kenny Meadows

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January 1844—January 1849
Richard Doyle's first design

THE COVERS OF PUNCH

On January 6th 1949 the present cover of *Punch* will be a hundred years old. Reproduced above are the six designs used between July 1841, when the paper was first published, and January 1849, when the existing cover made its appearance. At first the design was changed half-yearly, A. S. Henning's original—and not very successful—effort giving way in January 1842 to the much more attractive design by "Phiz" (already

well-known for his illustrations to *The Pickwick Papers*), and that in turn being succeeded, at the beginning of each new volume, by the designs, respectively, of William Harvey, Sir John Gilbert (later R.A.) and Kenny Meadows. But when Richard Doyle produced his first design, in January 1844, it was so well liked that it was retained for five years until Doyle himself designed another, which has been used ever since.

On Reading of a Revolution in Costa Rica

ALL things change; but down where the banana
Grows, by the sun-warmed Caribbean shore,
In the land of *siesta*, the country of *mañana*,
Life goes on substantially as it did before:

Still down the palm-fringed roads of Nicaragua
The chattering soldiers with their bare brown toes
March, through Corinta, Leon and Managua
(Pausing at midday for a brief refreshing doze)

On to Cartago, stronghold of the Costa Ric-
An reactionaries, quaking as they hear
The drums of Freedom—what! shall the impostor eke
Out his stolen Presidency for another year?

Patriots in exile, Presidents in uniform—
Gazing at the atlas I see the whole thing plain
(Costa Rica lozenge-shaped, Nicaragua cuneiform).
Long may Time stand still beside the Spanish Main!
G. D. R. D.

Charivaria

THE New Year brings one new hope, says a writer. He doesn't mention what it is.

A British film company is thinking of producing a boxing comedy. The difference will be that fight fans won't be expected to pay up to fifteen guineas a seat to watch it.

Asked to explain his dismissal of two of his workmen, a Leeds employer said he was fed up with their loafing. He had stood about as much as they did.



The What-d'ye-call-it
"Nomenclature is the thing
on a sundial."
Schoolboy's answer.

A suburban housewife was suspicious of a caller wearing a monocle who said he had called to read the gas-meter. But as soon as she raised her lorgnette she recognized him as a fellow-patient.

A man recently sentenced to four years' hard labour made a short speech of thanks. Most of us just didn't bother.

According to a gossip columnist a well-known author has a pronounced squint. This is due, it is thought, to writing with one eye on the film rights.

A housewife expresses the hope that the Food Ministry will at least try to shop early for next Christmas.

Surprise is expressed by a tobacconist at the number of juvenile pipe-smokers nowadays. Surely there is a joke here somewhere about Oliver Moore asking for twist?

Thought for 1949

"Modern engineering and standardized production now bring mausoleum ownership well within the reach of modest income."
Advt. in "Life."

A case supposed to contain typewriters was found by the Customs to be full of whisky. We have heard of these potable typewriters before.

A system of identifying dogs by nose-prints is being tried in America. Our plan is to whistle, and if the animal takes no notice it is ours.

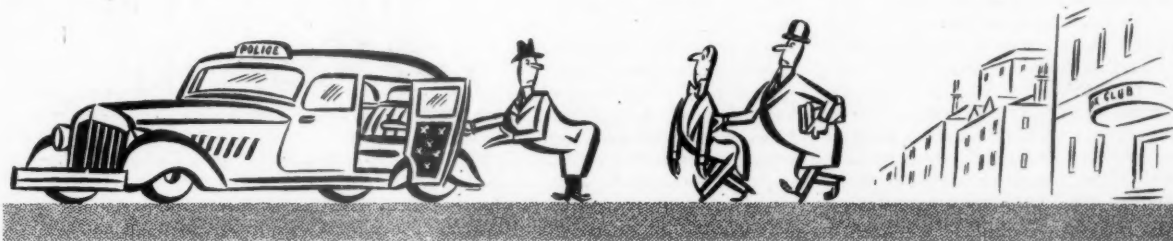
An American is to tour the world in an endeavour to reduce his weight. He will visit Italy and try to find out what makes the Tower of Pisa lean.



Oregon, U.S.A., has successfully tested, in a snowstorm, a road heated by pipes carrying anti-freeze solution. Its only drawback is said to be a smell of scorching tyres.

"WHAT IS REQUIRED IN A REFUSE COLLECTOR"
Heading in "Commercial Motor."
Can you guess?

A night-club proprietor found that two guests who had no cards of admission were police officers. Formalities were similarly waived when they returned his hospitality.



At the Pictures

Johnny Belinda—Once a Jolly Swagman—Scott of the Antarctic

THE impressive way in which JANE WYMAN gives a brilliantly attractive and astoundingly moving performance as a deaf-and-dumb girl in

ideal man for the part of the young doctor who first thinks of teaching the girl. (The early scenes in which understanding begins to dawn are extraordinarily good.) Constantly interesting, too, especially in the first half of the film, are the simple, strong black-and-white contrast and linear effects in the photography. But as a whole it's Miss WYMAN's picture.



(Johnny Belinda)

DANSE MACABRE

Belinda Macdonald JANE WYMAN
Locky McCormick STEPHEN McNALLY

Johnny Belinda (Director: JEAN NEGULESCO) without any of the customary Hollywood help (no voice, no glamorous appearance, for a long time not even a smile) has already been sufficiently discussed; but perhaps I may add my word to assure the hesitant that this is no film to be seen earnestly as a duty, but a genuinely pleasurable experience. Reduced to its essentials, the story is melodramatic in the extreme, exactly the sort of thing that is usually either praised or blamed by being called "stark" and well in the Cold-Comfort-Farm country. It might have been terrible, and as it is, the last third is sadly cheapened and popularized for the sake of an obvious "happy ending." But most of it is so well made and so well acted and Miss WYMAN particularly is so miraculously able to convey emotion and arouse sympathy without a sound, with hardly a gesture (this is classic film acting), that the good points triumph over the bad and the picture has to be described as not merely, on balance, good, but also as thoroughly enjoyable for almost everybody. Among the other players who do well are CHARLES BICKFORD as the stern, dour father, AGNES MOOREHEAD as the acid aunt, and STEPHEN McNALLY as the swaggering local bully; and LEW AYRES is the

gas-mask. Well, whatever you call it, it has an enormous following among young people, great masses of whom, enthusiastically yelling their heads off, get their chance to appear in *Once a Jolly Swagman*; for the story (from MONTAGU SLATER's novel) makes a great point of the importance and the impurity of the crowd in the career of a speedway rider. Bill Fox (DIRK BOGARDE) is first picked as a promising novice because "the girls'll go for him." The picture traces his career for about ten years from 1937, without—as such career-tracing stories go—very many surprises; we get the usual kind of situation in which the poor young man's head is turned by big money so that for a time he takes up with the wrong sort of girl in expensive society. The real value of the piece lies in its presentation,

sometimes with authentic-seeming detail and sometimes with a free use of "montage" and expressionism, of the size and the commercial basis of this noisy sport and its hold on its predominantly youthful public.

It is very late, by newspaper standards, to be writing about *Scott of the Antarctic* (Director: CHARLES FRENDE), which was the Command Performance film and was much discussed five weeks ago; but as the ordinary public showing began only a few days before these words appear there is some excuse for them. I wish it were possible to be more enthusiastic. The virtues of the picture are mostly negative: no cheap effects, no rhetorical posturing, no sentimentalizing of the tragic story. Certainly it is because of the overriding wish not to commit any of these sins that the film suffers. The characters of the brave men in Scott's expedition are very little differentiated: they are brave men up against appalling natural forces, that is all. There is some very striking photography of snow and ice; that, and the knowledge throughout that everything here is fact, give the film its individual and quite memorable feeling. R. M.



(Once a Jolly Swagman)

"—HOW I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE."

Bill Fox, a Speedway Star DIRK BOGARDE

Smouldering Hearts

THERE are quite a number of rules to remember when trying to write a best-selling novel. But my recent experience when writing a novel called *Smouldering Hearts* has convinced me that one of the most important rules is to keep your own personal preoccupations out of the story.

The plot of *Smouldering Hearts* was quite a simple one. Paul Pendennis, a young free-lance journalist, was taking a stroll in a large West End store in search of local colour when he caught a glimpse of a remarkably beautiful girl called Branwen Underhood buying a second-hand submarine. He fell madly in love with her and was able to effect an introduction by offering her some useful advice about her purchase. While he was wondering what such a girl could possibly want with a second-hand submarine anyhow, a mysterious stranger approached and hurried Branwen away without leaving any address. After an exciting series of incidents, involving a visit to a mysterious lighthouse in Worcestershire, a sinister whist-drive and several murders . . . but there is no need to go on. I have said enough to show that here was a book which could not fail, one would have thought, to become a best-seller. It had everything—romance, realism, humour, pathos, suspense, a happy ending. Its spelling was excellent. Yet it was rejected by every publisher in the country.

I think the trouble was that the writing of the book happened to coincide with a severe tobacco famine. I had to ration myself in cigarettes, and as I toiled away at my typewriter, hour after hour, I found myself assailed all the time by mysterious promptings. The thing started harmlessly enough. I noticed fairly early on in the book that Paul Pendennis was rather a heavy smoker. In fact the opening sentence of the book was "Paul Pendennis lit a cigarette." There was nothing unusual in that. When Branwen first asked Paul to explain the escape mechanism of her submarine he lit a cigarette before replying. There was nothing very strange about that. But when, in his emotion, he threw away a half-smoked cigarette, and then changed his mind and picked it up again, I began to suspect that things were getting beyond my control. My fears were confirmed when he had what seemed to be a totally unnecessary conversation with the mysterious stranger about the merits of different types of tobacco.

By the time I got to Chapter Four, where Paul, lying bound and helpless in a disused lighthouse, was being taunted by Gorgoni, a villainous Italian submarine designer, the cigarette famine had got so bad that it was difficult to buy any cigarettes at all. Was it entirely fortuitous, I wondered, that Gorgoni, while taunting my hero, should chain-smoke exotic Russian cigarettes? I tried to pull myself together. "With an oath," I wrote, "Gorgoni flung the half-smoked cigarette from him. 'Come,' he snarled, 'it is time to make an end of this foolery.' His raised knife winked wickedly in the lamplight. Quick as thought, with a convulsive movement, Paul twisted himself on his side and, with another convulsive movement, managed to seize the still-smouldering cigarette in his lips . . ."

With an oath I rushed from the room and, after combing London for three hours, found a packet of ten cigarettes. The rest of Chapter Four had to be devoted to explaining how Paul, Gorgoni, and several other characters decided to give up smoking. Now, I thought, we may be able to get on with the story. I could not have been more wrong. By next day I had finished my cigarettes, and the characters were soon as busy as ever offering each other cigarettes from gold cases, meditatively selecting them from exquisite lacquered boxes, lighting them before replying, and so on. Even Branwen started smoking, using a long jade holder. An attempt to make Paul smoke a pipe lasted only for a couple of pages, and as the famine got worse, passages like this became more and more frequent: "On a narrow ledge on the cliff-face, hardly large enough for a foothold, Paul and the villainous Dutchman battled for life. Van Dieman's cigarette, gripped between puffed spittle-smearred lips, glowed wanly as he came in again and again for the kill, while Paul desperately blew stinging smoke in his enemy's face. Two thousand feet below, where the sea boiled angrily, he glimpsed through half-closed eyes a dim square object which seemed no bigger than a packet of twenty. Was it? Yes, it was the rubber dinghy, with Branwen in it, and, he hoped against hope, a fresh supply of cigarettes."

As the book progressed, many of the characters, who had started as gun-runners, preparatory schoolmasters or adventurers, turned out to have connections with the tobacco industry, and I even invented an entirely new

character, a benevolent cigarette-manufacturer called Pills-Wayler, whose favourite method of starting a conversation was to say "I found this box of a hundred on my way upstairs. Care to have it?" Even Paul and Branwen had sunk so low by this time that they seldom refused these gifts.

In spite of all these difficulties I struggled on, and eventually reached the end of the story. There were no cigarettes to be had at all by this time, and when I wrote the final paragraph I had not had a smoke for a whole fortnight.

"Hand in hand on the terrace," I wrote, "Paul and Branwen lingered, watching the sunset bathe the distant hills in purple light. With a single impulse they turned and looked into each other's eyes.

'I love you, Branwen.'

'I love you, Paul.'

And at this point of course the lovers should have fallen into each other's arms. I had every intention of having them do so. But it seemed that an irresistible force intervened. I found myself writing: "Paul's eyes strayed to a bulky object that lay in a corner of the terrace. Without a word he seized a hammer and broke open a packing-case containing twelve thousand five hundred cigarettes. Slowly, he selected a carton holding a hundred packets of twenty.

'Have you a match, Branwen?' he whispered softly.

THE END."

What a book that would have been, if only . . . But of what use are regrets?

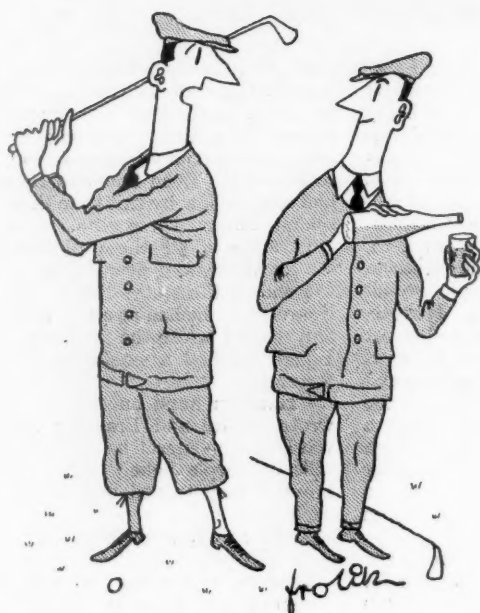
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Lysenko

or The Future of Shaving

COMRADE LYSENKO says, one hears,
That in about a million years
We males shall never need to
shave;
By then our whiskers will behave
With rectitude, obey the laws,
And never venture out of pores;
Or, maybe, every morn at eight
They'll promptly drop into a
plate . . .

Something like that, at any rate, Lysenko seems to indicate, And anyone who disagrees With what Lysenko says, well, he's An errant follower of Weissmann And consequently not a Neissmann.



"No, thanks—I'm driving!"

H. J.'s Dramatic Fragments

I WROTE this Fragment after trying to help the Twins with their prep. They both insisted on having my attention at the same time, and as one was doing a Greek Unseen from *Euclid* and the other was doing non-Euclidean geometry, bemused is what I became, until I had to sit down quietly in the chimney corner and soothe myself by literary composition, this so restoring my spirits that I ran all about the house singing "Tooral-ooral-ay," until sobered by my wife's stretching a string across the stairs.

"WELL HELD, SIR": A TALE OF THE COURT OF APPEAL

(The scene is a Brains Trust in a Village Hall)

VICAR. I do not think I need waste time introducing speakers whom we know so well. I will, therefore, read the first question at once.

COLONEL VAUGH. Certainly you must touch upon our qualifications. I myself am very hazy about Mr. Buckling. Of course one has seen him about, but that is a very different thing from finding him picked out of the rut to be a Brain.

VICAR. Mr. Buckling is the highly respected Chairman of the Social Committee, which has done so much to make this evening a success. The first question comes from someone who signs himself "Gainsayer": "Is it worse to cheat the Income Tax or to neglect a pet dog?"

COLONEL VAUGH. For some dogs a bit of neglect is really kindness. It toughens them psychologically.

MISS WANCH. I agree. The possessive pet-lover causes much unhappiness which may well end in serious neurosis. In such cases analysis would be out of the

question, though something might be done with verbal association tests for parrots. What about shock therapy?

SIR TIMOTHY KEDGE. You can't do better than penicillin. I use it for everything.

VICAR. The Brains Trust have threshed this question pretty thoroughly and their answer is in the affirmative. Next, Mr. Hall-Ball asks: "What is the best way of removing sugar from sweetened tea?"

COLONEL VAUGH. Hire an analyst.

MISS WANCH. If he means remove the flavour rather than its cause, I recommend oil of peppermint.

SIR TIMOTHY KEDGE. When I am handed already sweetened tea I feel as if I have no will of my own at all.

COLONEL VAUGH. Good—I know this bit. Never been on a Brains Trust yet where Free Will didn't crop up. Well, then, imagine you are leading a horse along a towpath. Imagine, furthermore—

VICAR. Mr. Hall-Ball will, no doubt, agree that his question has been very fully answered. Now, a questioner hiding beneath the pseudonym "Hoity-Toity" inquires: "Pray, whence do crocodiles derive their lachrymatory reputation?"

COLONEL VAUGH. They are the reverse of jackasses, if you come to think of it.

MISS WANCH. The truth of the proposition cannot be conditional on your own thought.

COLONEL VAUGH. Another bit I know! I start from the premise that our knowledge of the external world is itself internal. Then . . . let me see, is it the bit about the monkeys next?

SIR TIMOTHY KEDGE. Surely, they are generally used to prove that everything is, but thinking makes it more so: quite a different point of view.

VICAR. So much for "Hoity-Toity." Let us turn to Lord Crawn, who asks: "Would it not be much better if mankind behaved in a more brotherly way?"

COLONEL VAUGH. The word "better"—

MISS WANCH. Not the Good, the True and the Beautiful, please.

COLONEL VAUGH. But I have a magnificent illustration, beginning with two express trains at rest in a station.

MISS WANCH. No, I want to protest against the assumption implicit in the question—that women should be more brotherly. I wish to make a stand for the womanly woman.

SIR TIMOTHY KEDGE. I do not think a really womanly woman would do that.

VICAR. Lord Crawn has had his ration of our time. Next comes a question from Sir Timothy Kedge: "What is the name of that stuff that goes pop when you step on it?"

SIR TIMOTHY KEDGE. Ammonium tri-iodide.

VICAR. A very good answer. I am afraid we have time for only one more question. Mrs. Beetle, of Little Plumbs Guest House, asks: "How would the Brains Trust translate the phrase, 'Sine qua non'?"

SIR TIMOTHY KEDGE. Let us encourage Mr. Buckling a little. Let us wait for him to answer.

MR. BUCKLING. Not but what.

MISS WANCH. I don't think it could possibly mean that.

MR. BUCKLING. Of course it couldn't; but we were not asked what it meant. We were asked how this Brains Trust would translate it, and looking at them that's my guess.

VICAR. I fear we must close now. Three cheers for the Brain Trusters.

BRAINS TRUST. Hip-hip-hurray!

FINIS

Lady Addle and the National Health Service

Bengers, Herts, 1948

DEAR MR. BEVAN,—I thought you might be interested to know how even a "Tinker's Cuss" family was getting on under your new Health Service, and as dear Margaret is just about to have her appendix out, I feel that no one is more *au fait* with the position than I am.

First of all I must tell you that, unlike most of my friends, I have never been opposed to the scheme. We Coots have a strong feudal instinct in our blood, which has flowed all down the centuries, carrying with it the firm conviction that the vassals should contribute to the welfare of their overlords. That service has been sadly lacking recently, but has been fully revived now with the enforced contribution of the poor to the upkeep of the rich. "Ah, Harry, my man," I say to our boot-mender, whom I always suspected of voting Labour (very disloyal of him when he is Addle's tenant, but he is a good fellow in other respects). "The extra money *you* are having to pay now is all so as to help *me*." The odd thing is that he had never thought of it in that light before and didn't really seem pleased at the idea.

So you see, dear Mr. Bevan, I bear you no grudge, and indeed, am only so sorry for you because it seems you have no dress-clothes, which must be a sad plight for a Cabinet Minister. I am arranging to send you an old suit of Addle's—which came from the very best tailor in 1898—but is too big for him since the food shortage, which does not appear, luckily, to affect you so much, so I think the suit will just fit you. Anyway, it goes as a "bundle for Bevan" with my sincere good wishes.

But I must get back to dear Margaret. It all started about a month ago when both she and little Hirsie were very ill after a marmalade sponge they had eaten at lunch. It was nothing unusual for Hirsie, for he has such a healthy appetite, especially for sweet things, that he is frequently ill, bless him. But I was rather worried about Margaret, so sent for Dr. Dander, whom I continue to treat as a friend even though he is now a Civil Servant, and he examined my dear girl. He immediately suspected an appendix, and said he wished her to see Sir Frank Webb-Foote, who is of course at the top of the tree, with a fee to match. He has taken out all the best appendixes, from Royalty downwards, for years—including one only last month for Evie Cannister's boy at Eton (the only heir too, as Sir Frank must have appreciated)—so I was delighted to think that the National Health Service should place dear Margaret so suitably in the care of one who has handled half *Debrett*.

He was quite delightful to her, Margaret told me, recalling many merry tales of operations on our friends and family, including one time when he had attended Mipsie and she was so dismayed to hear that the "clips" used during the operation were not made of diamonds! (My sister, by the way, has suddenly developed an interest in the Labour Party—I can't think why. She says she "must see what there is in Socialism for her." It is, indeed, the sign of a great mind to be receptive to new ideas at the age of seventy-seven!)

Sir Frank wished Margaret to have two X-rays taken at our local hospital, and, thanks to you, dear Mr. Bevan, these were also free, as was the barium which she had to drink the night before. To my surprise, this proved to be the most beautiful creamy substance, too dear to my cook's heart to be missed. So I whipped it up with some ginger cordial and dried eggs for a mock Zabaglione, of which we all partook—though Addle very generously gave his portion to the dog. In consequence the first X-ray was not a

success, I fear, and although I explained the circumstances and offered to pay, there did not appear to be any regulations applying to patients' mothers making barium into Zabaglione, so the retake of the X-ray was also at the country's expense, which was of course very nice for us.

The result of all this is that dear Margaret has a sub-acute appendix, and is going into a private nursing home next week to have it taken out. It is sad that it seems well-nigh impossible to have it removed under the National Health Service, but she would have to wait over three months for a bed in a hospital unless she could arrange for her appendix to become acute, which we are not all clever enough to do, alas. But never mind, dear Mr. Bevan, I'm sure you did your best. It was just unlucky that your best wasn't quite good enough.

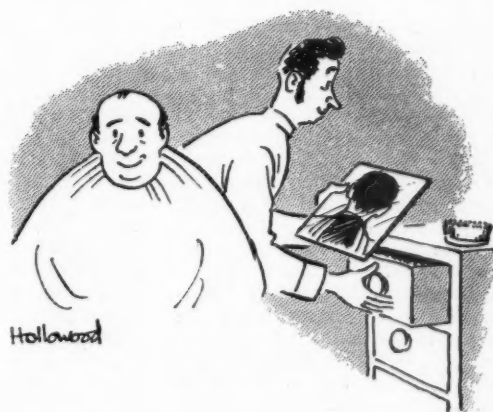
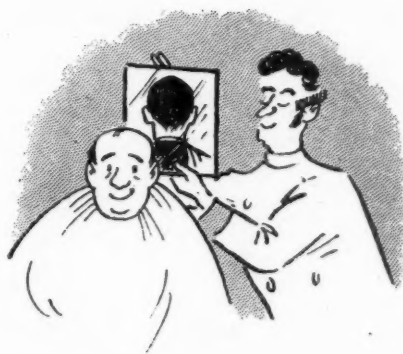
Yours faithfully,

BLANCHE ADDLE OF EIGG.

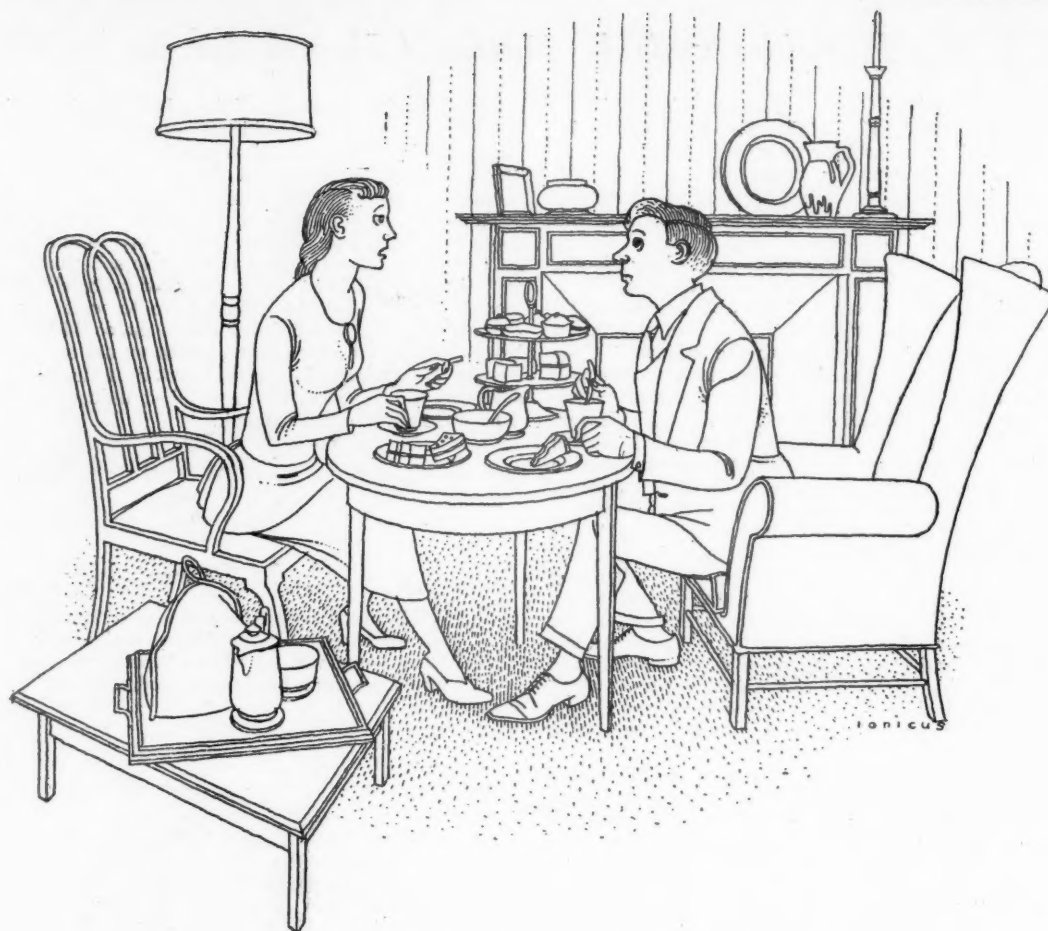
M. D.

Useful Presents

THIS Christmas time my wife and I agreed
To buy each other gifts we *really* need;
Result—my wife now has a brooch, in jade,
And I possess a brand-new garden spade.



Hollowood



"I hope the refrigerator will be here in time for the house-warming party."

Truly Mural

HAZLITT, like a later distinguished writer, thought highly of painting. He found it soothing, among other things. "No angry passions rise," he said, "to disturb the silent progress of the work, to shake the hand, to dim the brow: no irritable humours are set afloat." But his two essays on the subject make no mention of painting on walls from a child's paint-box, leaning steeply on the arm of an easy-chair. It was left to me to try this.

The moon is easy; the stars more difficult, especially when the body or nub, upon which the delicate, toast-like triangles are based, is of the irregular shape produced when a lump of plastic wood, worm-fashioned, has been rammed into a hole in the plaster and its tail splodged flat. It is because

of the plastic wood that I am painting the moon and stars this morning—or, rather, because of the holes in the wall: or, at any rate, because of the curtain that was to have gone up on the wire intended to be stretched between the screw-eyes that should have been where the holes in the wall now are . . . or, to give you the position at a glance, I should perhaps blame the builder, who, despite many earnest promises, has not yet come to knock the wall down. If he had, there would naturally be no wall for me to paint the moon and stars on; and if he had only said outright that he never would, then we should have had a door put in the wall—there is a doorway already: you know these quaint old houses—instead of merely hanging a curtain to keep the draught out until he *did* come. To go

right to the root of it—if I'd never bought the house . . .

However.

There has been some discussion lately on whether this is the best wall to knock down in order to enlarge our sitting-room. Knowledgeable friends have assured us that this one is holding the house up, and that the wall at right-angles to it would serve our purpose better. I quite see that it would be unwise to knock down the wall that is holding the house up, at any rate in one drastic operation. This morning I have just been knocking it down a little at a time.

I do not want you to think that we have been living all this time in a house with a (large, oblong) hole in the wall; the curtain has already been up, and only came down this week-end, and

then only at one end. I was asleep at the time, but awoke when I heard the sharp report and sustained whirring; the curtain top had shut itself up tight, like a closed concertina, and a plaster-caked screw-eye vibrated giddily against the ceiling. I did nothing at the time beyond brushing a little powdered distemper from my coat. This morning I am painting the moon and stars on the wall.

The motif came to me out of the blue. Earlier this morning I drove a number of holes in the plaster and pushed an equal number of wooden plugs through into the mysterious hollows beyond. They vanished, yet I did not hear them fall. Eerie. Then I stood back, wondering how the appearance of the wall could be improved; at that time it suggested an area of the Yukon goldfields after a series of rich strikes. An ordinary man would have filled the craters with plaster; but then an ordinary man would have had some plaster. I had to make shift with plastic wood. I used a tin of the stuff, rolling lumps into thin worms and popping them into the holes. They disappeared. I had not enough plastic wood to silt up the whole of the hollow right down to the floor, and fortunately, when I was nearing the bottom of the tin, I hit on the idea of making the worms fatter; they then wedged satisfactorily, and I splodged out their tails into those shapes so difficult to convert, under paint, into really persuasive stars. The biggest splodge was the easiest; it was roughly the shape of a moon, and it is within the bounds of possibility that this is how I got the idea of painting a moon over it; after that the stars came naturally. I was pleased with the idea. Art, it seemed to me, would conceal art. Our guests, confronted not with dark irregular splodges as if a tin of tomato soup had exploded nearby, but with a section of the firmament, would think it "sweet," would ask about it. "Well," I should say modestly, "as the builder was so long in coming to knock the wall down..."

I went to find the paints.

The six lozenges of pigment seemed at first to be all muddy red, but I scratched the lozenge labelled Chrome Yellow and found enough for several moons. That was an hour or two ago, and there is very little chrome yellow left now. Some of it is on my coat, some down my throat, some glistens and trickles down the wall. The moon and the stars do not look right, they hold no mirror up to Nature. The moon is not quite moon-shaped, owing to an irregularity in the ink-bottle

round whose base I drew my first careful circle—as I thought; nor are the stars quite star-shaped: their pointed bits are squat, and chrome yellow runs from their tips in uneven streamers; nor is their colour convincing: plastic wood seems a poor foundation for inferior water-colour, so some are mud-coloured in the middle, while the middles of others are quite black and yawning, because in my anxiety to impose a thick layer of paint I have shoved the plastic worms, splodged tails and all, through into the mysterious hollows beyond.

Stepping down from the chair-arm I survey the effect judicially. It is hellish. My angry passions rise. My hand shakes. My brow dims. Irritable humours are set afloat. I seize the hanging, lopsided concertina of curtain and wrench it savagely. A divot of plaster falls on my head.

One thing is settled—this, after all, is the wall that will have to come down. And if such a pile of bread-crumbs is indeed holding up the house, and that comes down too, then (in my present mood) that will suit me perfectly.

J. B. B.

Transfer Tattle

THAT singularly pleasing and convenient means of exchange, so expressive of the high level of civilization reached in our era, the Transfer Fee System, has spread from its breeding-place on the football field to other arenas of sporting and cultural activity. With the object of keeping our readers informed of the latest moves in the World of Letters we present with pride our new feature, conducted by Aruntius.

Dent and Sons are to be congratulated on securing for only £9,000 Peter Cheyney, wizard delineator of sock-and-noggin crime, whose racy thrillers will in future bear the Everyman imprint.

Long famed for innumerable publications on stresses and strains, mechanics and logarithms, the House of Spon is opening its new season's drive to popularize trigonometry and the calculus by announcing the transfer of Agatha Christie from the Crime Club at a fee of £10,000. The first of the mighty Poirot's adventures in the figure world will appear in the spring, entitled *Hercule and the Curious Cosines*.

J. B. Priestley, Yorkshire's wonder quill-driver, transferred last month to Hutchinson's list, has refused to write. "If I can't write in Bruddersford, I won't write at all," he told our special representative yesterday. "Hutchinson wants me to set up in West End, but why should I, I ask, when I'm nicely fixed in Bruddersford? I get a steady six ounces of tobacco every week from the local, no queueing, and you can take it from me I'm not giving that up for nowt. No smoke, no work, so Hutchinson and Co. can think that out." The growing evidence of indiscipline at the typewriter is causing

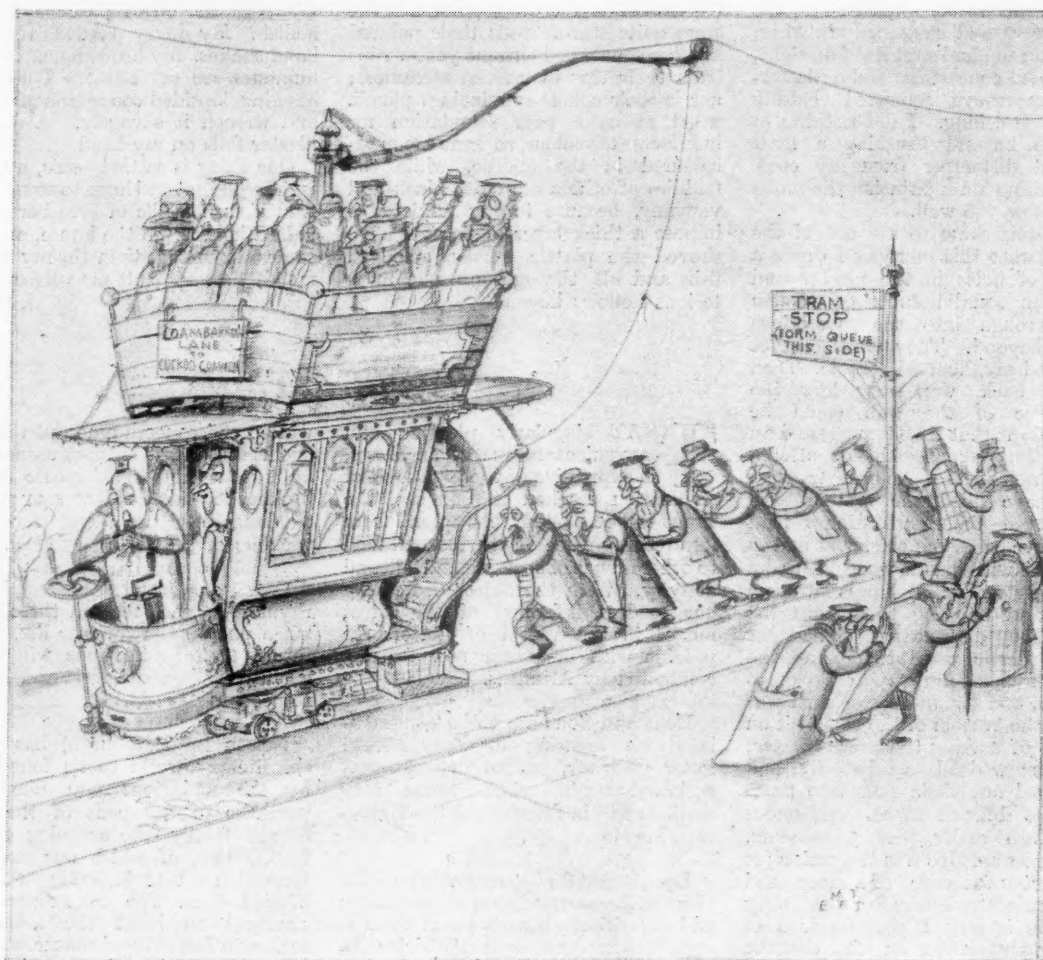
widespread concern amongst the managements, and it is most earnestly to be hoped that the *impasse* will be broken, for this incident may well set a dangerous precedent for other wielders of the stylo to follow.

C. Day Lewis and Rob Frost, leading rhymesters, each fetched three figures when put on the transfer list, and in future their productions will appear exclusively in the *Lancet* and *Autocar* respectively.

Nelson (of Edinburgh) has rocked the literary world to its foundations by the audacious and unexpected purchase of the pens of the whole Sitwell family, the outgoing grossing £8,350 10s., of which our stable information is that £8,000 is on account of Sir Osbert. The lucky owners have arranged to billet the aristocratic scribes in John Knox's house, and have every expectation of a new high in the output of poems for the little ones and exciting yarns for boys.

Oxford University Press, staid adherent to the classic and the conservative in publishing, is angling for the services of veteran dramatist Noel Coward, social critic and portrayer of the almost forgotten Naughty Twenties. Blackie and Son are also rumoured to be in the field, and the price is expected to exceed the £10,000 mark.

Winston Churchill, right-wing champion, has been roped into the Gollancz corral for a fee undisclosed, but stated by the pundits to surpass the £22,000 record set up when Constable and Co. sold "Geeby" Shaw to the Amalgamated Press. We understand that the title of the first book by the scion of Marlborough to be published under the Gollancz flag will be called *Victory, Victor?*



"One thing about these power cuts, we can accommodate the 'ole of the queue."

Broken Bottles

DEAR old Miss Crowe, so kind and sweet,
Lives at The Limes in Jasmine Street,
With its dear old garden. Round it all
There is a mellowed old brick wall
On top of which is broken glass
Of every shape and hue and class
Shining and bright—
And safe at night.

Each evening as she goes upstairs
She thinks about her plums and pears—
Precious old friends she's had for years—
Her peaches, cherries; and what fears

She might possess are set at naught
By the quite reassuring thought
Of all that glass—
No thief could pass.

She's kind and sweet, again say I;
She wouldn't even harm a fly . . .
One night I found, close to her wall,
An urchin, filthy and very small,
Shrieking with fright and pain; his palms
Were cut to ribbons.

No, no qualms
Need touch Miss Crowe—
How could she know?

JUSTIN.



ELEPHANTASIA

"Hold that for four years."



"We're putting up a camp bed for you in the wings to-night, Robson—the whole place is simply overrun with mice."

1949

I AM the Brave New Year. But why
Should I decry the Year gone by?
Youth should be shy as well as
bold,
And reverently use the old.
Dismiss him not with scowl and curse:
He might have been so much, much
worse
One great advantage he had got:
He was a Leap Year—I am not.
A pity—but throughout my reign
The ladies must be dumb again,
Though I dare say they'll find a way
Of showing what they may not say.
We might have had to start, once
more,
The customary Autumn war:
And many wise men thought we
should—
Against the land of Brotherhood.
But, blame the Old Year as you will,
The lights are in the windows still.
We do not fear the end of day,
And no invader comes this way.

Instead, to this old isle there came,
To keep alive the Olympic Flame,
Young men and maids of every race
Who thought of Peace as well as pace.
They came to win: they stayed to
find
A warmer feeling for mankind:
And, home again, I think they said
"The Lion's very far from dead."
Some cricketers arrived as well
And taught their tutors how to spell,
While Mother chuckled in her chair
To see how good her children were.
One corner of the cosmic mess
Can boast a curious success.
By feeding Prussians from the sky
We're beating back an old ally.
But Russia's an indecent theme
Of which to speak I would not dream.
Still, in the fight of Night and
Day,
The English-speakers lead the way.
America still shows her worth,
The mightiest Charity on earth.

And we, with no more thanks than Job,
Spread Liberty across the globe.
From India and the Holy Land
Our exit hardly got a hand.
But certain folk at last have seen
Just what the British part has been.
Home politics we'll not discuss:
But foreigners have said to us
"You cannot beat, you cannot touch
A race which bears, so long, so much—
Where men receive commands to pay
Their income-tax on Christmas Day,
And few, however hard they slave,
Can ever earn enough to save".
Yet do not chide poor '48.
There may be worse than he. You
wait!
And if you look to '49
To make you rich and fat and fine,
You too, you know, have parts to play.
What are your Resolutions, pray?
At all events, I'll do my best,
And you, good folk, must do the
rest.
A. P. H.

Situations Vacant

AT East Finchley I had just finished reading the headlines of the *Daily Express* on my right and the *Financial Times* in the opposite corner, when a man in brown corduroys and a duffle coat got in and sat beside me.

"Remember me?" he said.

I said yes, but only vaguely.

"Must have been in the pre-Tribunal days," he said. "By the way, I was mixed up in a queer business last week. Did you notice my picture in the papers?"

I said no, I didn't think so.

"Of course, if you really want to study human nature," he said, "you should get a job in a cigarette-kiosk. Wheedling, threatening, cajoling, pleading, promises of turkeys and whisky for Christmas. Good racket, that 'under-the-counter-for-favourite-customers' business if you don't overdo it. Pity I overdid it."

"What about the queer business you were mixed up in?" I said.

"Don't talk to me," he said, "about Art for the People. When I was working in a public library my heart used to bleed for all authors. They pour out their souls and torture themselves in order to write books. Eventually the books reach the libraries; and then what happens? In comes the public and wanders around the shelves. 'That one's a bit too heavy to carry': 'What, no pictures?': 'Something that will fit into my shopping basket': 'What lovely red covers!' Public taste? I wouldn't wish it on a dog. Well, on behalf of the authors, I decided to meet the Philistines on their own level. Worked out my own private system of library fines for overdue books. Not much in it, of course, so I found a market for some of the stuff in the Reference Section. Nobody ever read it. Sold three sets of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* before I was rumbled. 'Disappointed,' they said. 'Promising young man—position of trust, etc., etc.' They were old editions anyway."

By this time, I thought, playing with my propelling pencil, I have usually completed the easier anagrams in my crossword.

"As a matter of interest," he said, "did you know that there are more motor-car showrooms in Great Portland Street than in any other street in London? I did quite well there for a time. Used to sell expensive cars (less purchase tax) to rich foreigners. One adamant Greek insisted on immediate delivery. I took him round the corner and sold him a brand-new Studebaker

on the spot, cash down. Told me I'd confirmed his faith in British business ability, got in and drove away. Trouble was, the car didn't belong to my firm. Some chap had parked it there while he was having a cup of tea. Talk about confusion!"

"Cigarette?" I said.

"Thanks," he said. "I never refuse. What was I talking about?"

"You were telling me how you overdid it in the cigarette-kiosk."

"Please, old chap. Now you've interrupted a perfectly good train of thought."

It occurred to me to point out that his train had been derailed long ago.

"Yes, of course," he said. "Just after leaving that amusement arcade."

"What amusement arcade?" I said.

"Didn't I explain about the amusement arcade?"

"No."

"My uncle," he said, "had a barber's shop in Torquay. It was only a short step from there to clipping and trimming pet dogs. All you need is a pair of clippers (my uncle didn't miss them), a notice which says, 'Poodles a Speciality. Six-hour service,' and an address. That's where my two pedigree bitches came in handy. Kept them in the back room and waited for the customers. Did a bit of breeding on the quiet. Some people will pay anything for a pedigree pup."

I replaced my propelling pencil and folded my paper so that I could no longer see the crossword.

"I don't quite see the connection with the amusement arcade," I said.

"I thought it was fairly obvious," he said. "Look at America. The land of salesmanship. 'How to buy and sell your grandmother in six easy lessons.' But, believe me, that's one thing you can carry too far. I worked on commission when I was an assistant in a men's wear shop, so it was up to me to sell all I could. One day I thought I'd experiment on a customer. Tried out the 'your-friends-will-laugh-if-they-see-you-dressed-like-that' approach. Told him quietly that I could fix him up with a new suit, as no self-respecting person would be seen dead in the clothes he was wearing. He was only the Head Office manager."

"I get out at Warren Street," I said.

"What about you?"

He said: "After auctioneering ex-Government surplus in Petticoat Lane I tried a job as clapper-boy in a film studio, but I told you about that, didn't I?"

"Not a word," I said.

"You would have liked my granddad," he said. "A proper card. He used to say, Try anything once. So there I was just after the Olympic Games, acting as guide to three Swedes, two Italians and a Persian. 'Show us the underworld,' they said. I knew just what they wanted. Something low enough to be exciting but not too low to be objectionable. Fair enough."

"Took them to the doss-house under Hungerford Arches, a negro café near Old Compton Street and a couple of pubs in Wapping. They had a whip-round for me when it was all over and recommended me to all their friends. Wish we had the Olympics every year. Paying game."

"What exactly is it like being a clapper-boy in a film studio?" I said, taking out my season ticket.

He said, "Never believe the stories you hear about beggars dying with two thousand quid sewn into their coat-linings. The reason beggars are despised is that they don't make a good living. If they earned fifteen pounds a week, begging would become an honourable profession. Now busking is worth while, but you've got to be original. Alongside theatre-queues I used to play the mouth-organ, recite 'All the world's a stage,' sing 'Any Old Iron' and do a soft-shoe shuffle. My old granddad always said, Blind 'em with science before you send the cap round. It works wonders."

"Euston," I said. "I get out next stop."

"This is my station," he said. "Remember me telling you about the time I was an attendant in a Turkish Baths?"

"Yes of course," I said, finally getting the idea.

"Well, I met a chap there who promised to fix me up with a job in the Ministry of Food. Can't keep at the same job year in, year out, can you? So any time you're short of a few ration books, come and look me up."

"Certainly," I said, "I'll do that."

"Amazing what I learn from people," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"If there's one thing I enjoy," he said, "it's listening to other people's experiences."

"Cheerio," I said, collecting the torn shreds of my season ticket.

Interval Signal

If Whittington could hear to-day
The message of the bells of Bow
He'd be surprised to find them say
Not "Turn again!" but "Half a
mo'!"

You Too Can Have a Beautiful Mind.

I AM a great one for efficiency. I always have been. As a boy I knew far more about productivity than the little chap in the Government ad.—I mean, of course, the smirking schoolboy who peels off his impot of fifty lines with two pens tied together. I should have considered such a device hopelessly clumsy. When I had fifty lines to do I wrote only one, as a sort of introduction, and passed it round the form to be copied the necessary number of times. I used to think that the large classes of those days were in some way connected with the standard punishment of fifty lines and the advantages of the division of labour. But I never allowed my methods to become too rigid. On one occasion, I remember, when faced with heavy arrears of lines I decided to go bankrupt. I tackled each of my creditors separately and got them to agree to a final payment of ten per cent. in full settlement. Only old Hunslett, the Phys. master, insisted on his full pound of flesh. One summer holiday, assisted by the forced labour of my two sisters, I built up a reserve account of two thousand five hundred lines which I banked with the housemaster on the opening day of the new term and drew on prodigally for six weeks or more. Then, when the account seemed exhausted, I was able to prove that I was fully entitled to interest at the standard rate of five per cent. On yet another occasion I dabbled unsuccessfully with mimeography.

But I am not concerned here with the past. I want to describe the methods by which I have converted the customarily casual and haphazard trade of journalism into an exact and routine science. Every writer knows that his best ideas struggle to the surface of his mind when he is in bed and in that most delectable of all physical conditions, near-coma. He knows too that these ideas submerge again—never to reappear—long before the dawn, leaving behind only a few ripples of nagging frustration. Well, I have altered all that. At the side of my bed there is a table and on the table lies one of those little pad-things with a covering of celluloid or Cellophane, and right by its side lies a pencil. All I have to do, when an idea strikes me, is to stretch out my right hand, grip the pencil and scribble a word or two on the pad. Then I can sleep peacefully in the knowledge that my next week's rations are as good as partly paid for.

I am not saying that I have yet

completely mastered this method. Far too often the ringing of the alarm-clock finds me with my right hand clutching the pencil and resting on an empty pad. Sometimes I am so afraid that sleep will overtake me before I have made my notes that I start writing long before the creative drowsiness is upon me, and produce only a string of unmarketable puerilities. One night last week—after a somewhat heavy supper, as it happens—I had a truly brilliant idea which would have made a long article, a shortish novel or (at least) an admirable speech for the cricket club's annual dinner. My right arm emerged from the bed-clothes like the slide of a trombone and knocked the pencil off the table. Even as I traced my notes on the eiderdown with the tip of my index-finger I knew that something was amiss. There was a heavy and sustained buzzing in my ears. Subconsciously I knew that although I had some vague appointment with the floor of the bedroom the warm wax in which I lay would hold me fast for ever . . .

Then I heard my name repeated three times in a forced whisper. I mumbled an answer. The voice was urgent with fear. There were burglars and vampires in the house, it said. I replied that there were no such things as vampires, that intruders at this time of night could only be harmless post-office snoopers examining our electrical apparatus for suppressors, and that I was losing my beauty-sleep.

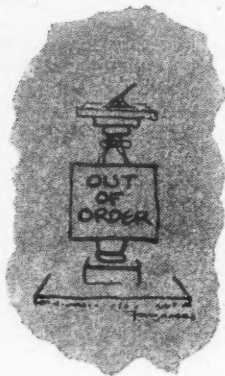
"You're a miserable coward. I heard a noise, I tell you."

"Don't be ridic— Oh, that! It was only my pencil—I knocked it off the table."

"But you were fast asleep, snoring like a pig."

"Rubbish, I haven't closed my eyes yet."

"You don't snore with your eyes."



It went on like this for some time, until I was driven to take action. I got out of bed into my slippers, opened the door and stood on the landing while I counted thirty slowly under my breath. Then I bustled back into the room.

"It's all right," I said, "your mother's picture's fallen off the sitting-room mantelpiece."

"Liar."

I got into bed. All was quiet. I was just dropping off to sleep when a thought bubbled up out of the dark recesses of my mind—a warning. It was a revelation of all the trouble I could avoid by remembering to knock my mother-in-law's photograph off the sitting-room mantelpiece the first thing next morning. I had to remember that. My arm reached out for the table. I grabbed the pencil and scribbled the words "M's picture." It was a bit of a shock to find the pencil there after all, but it didn't keep me awake for very long.

As I say, you can't expect to master the principles of efficiency without a struggle. I face the future, however, with the utmost confidence. Hod.

Days Gone By

MUMMY! Mummy, they've got a magic lantern, only it isn't a lantern, it's an electric-light bulb, and Mummy, it was in an attic—found; I mean no one had seen it for years and it got uncovered. Mummy, why haven't we got an attic? Well, why didn't they make one when they made the house? Mummy, I wish we had an attic, with things that could be uncovered, things everyone had forgotten were there, Mummy, things from days gone by.

Well, Martin and Hilary; it's their grandmother's who's staying with them, only I think she's given it to them now. She found it in her attic like I've just told you, only she said it used to have a lamp, with a special smell, and now their father has made it an electric-light bulb instead it never bursts into flames like she says it often used to, and it has no romance. Mummy, what does it mean, no romance? Why is it no romance when the lamp isn't smelly? Mummy, I wish it had burst into flames. It must have been super when it made a terrific smoke and flames shot out of it.

Mummy, there was a slide with a huge fire on it, with firemen coming up

with horses, and catching people in blankets out of windows, and one of a war with soldiers in narrow trousers and horses, and "A Visit to the East" with mountains and temples and things, very spotty temples, but their uncle said the spots were mostly on the slides.

Their uncle; he was staying with them too. He said it all Took Him Back. Mummy, what did he mean, took him back? Why did it take him back? Mummy, where did it take him back? Mummy, the best slide wasn't a picture at all, it was just a pattern of beautiful colours, and you turned a handle and the colours all changed, and if you stood in front of the wall it made the pattern on whoever stood; it made it all over Martin's chest and all over Hilary's face, and I had it on my back. Mummy, we made patterns all over their father and their mother and their uncle and their grandmother, and everybody kept on saying it took them back. Mummy, wasn't it super, keeping on making patterns on them?

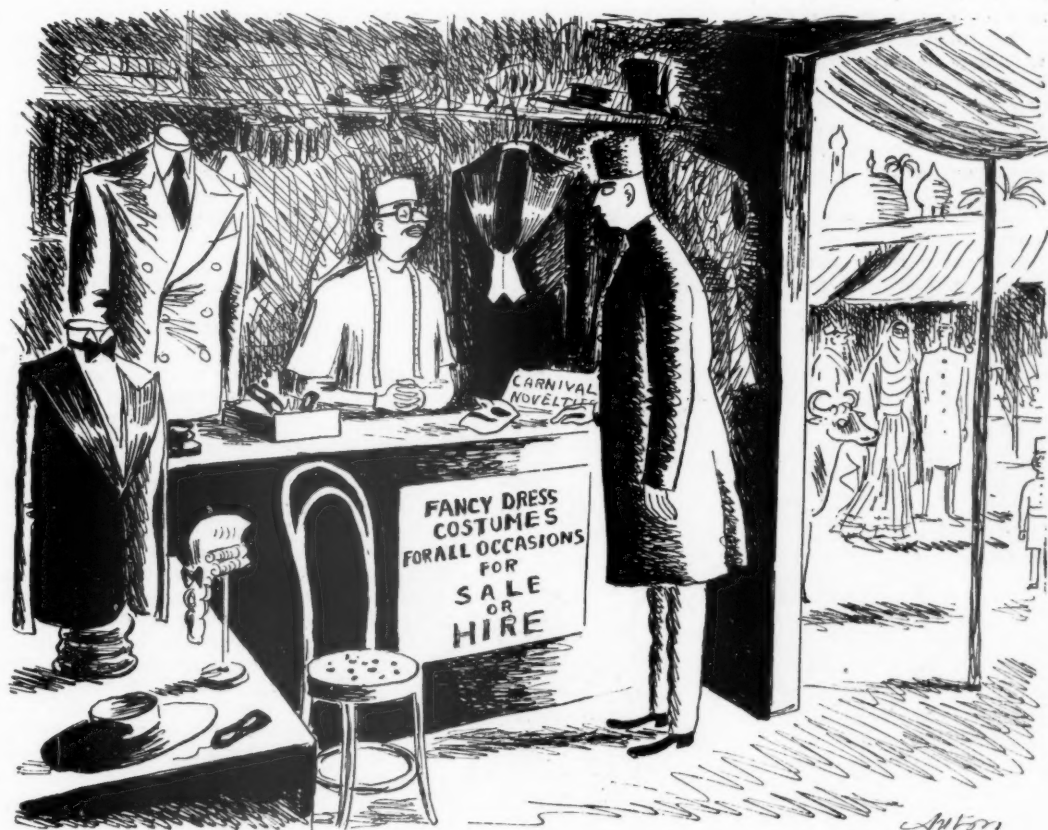
Mummy, may they bring it over here and you can see it, one day? May

they? May they lend it to us? Well, of course they'd like to lend it to us; why wouldn't they want us to borrow it? Mummy, I've got a smashing idea; I'll get a very long stick and point out all the slides, like the man who came to school. Well, you know, the man who'd been on a desert island looking at birds. Well, it mightn't have been desert, but he had to live in a tent because of no houses, and he and the other man counted every bird on the island. Well, the other man who was with him in the tent. Well, there might have been one or two birds hidden in the rocks that they hadn't noticed, just two or three birds there might have been, but they counted them all and put rings on them and counted the eggs and then they knew how many more there were. Well, how many more birds, Mummy, because no one had ever counted them before. And what you do is, you hit on the ground with your stick and say "Next slide, please," and someone else moves it for you, and you tell everyone what's interesting about it.

There were some very interesting

birds with the magic lantern, very funny with curly beaks, and I could have come back from seeing them, in a tent, with another man, and we could have put rings on all of them—on their legs, Mummy: well, it's to help you count—and I could say "This was the day the hurricane carried away everything into the sea so we were taken back to the mainland." Off the island, Mummy. I've just remembered where it was they were taken back, Mummy—I mean their grandmother and everybody—it was to Days Gone By. Mummy, what does it mean, days gone by?

Mummy, may we please borrow the magic lantern—well, I mean if they'd like to lend it to us; may we if?—and may we have a show with me with that very long feather duster thing—the not feather end, Mummy, and not have Days Gone By but something new that I'd think of to tell them with the pictures that they hadn't ever heard of before so it couldn't take them back anywhere and would be much more interesting for them; may I, Mummy, please?



The Slaughter of an Innocent

I MUST admit that he said he did not want a policy, even a fine policy such as the one I offered him. He said, quite clearly, that he did not want a policy; but I, schooled in all the arts of salesmanship, said that he did not know his own mind.

"Very well," he said, "you may start filling up the form."

I was stunned. I had had more trouble persuading myself to take out a policy. Nor did I notice anything sinister in the wording of his capitulation.

He gave me a chair at the table while he himself relaxed into an arm-chair, lit his pipe, and seemed to settle himself in for the evening. His wife sat in the other arm-chair and took up her knitting. She had finished about six inches of a scarf.

"What," I asked briskly, "is your full name?"

"Well," he said slowly—he spoke very slowly the whole time—"that's rather difficult. It so happens that my Christian names are rather muddled. I have two Christian names on my birth certificate and three Christian names on my baptismal certificate. The extra name on my baptismal certificate is Charles, and actually everybody calls me Charlie, so that's the name I'm known by more than any other. My wife always calls me Charlie, don't you, dear?"

"Yes, Charlie," she said.

"What is the name you usually use on legal documents?" I asked.

"Well, I've never really bothered much," he said, as though communing

with himself. "Sometimes I put the Charlie in and sometimes I leave it out. But in this case I want to get it right. With an insurance policy one can't be too careful. If I die I don't want them to say it was somebody else who died, do I, dear?"

"No, Charlie," she said. The scarf was already appreciably longer.

It was some time before I could quieten his fears on this score. Even then he could not make up his mind. First I put in the Charles, then he asked me to leave it out, and then he told me to include it after all. Finally, with a light laugh which had just the hint of a rattle in it I tore up the form and brought out a new one. I filled in his name and address, reading out the latter as I wrote it.

"Oh, dear," he said, when I had finished. "Did you write down this address?"

"Yes," I said.

"That's a pity," he said, "isn't it, dear?"

"Yes, Charlie," she said. The scarf was now as long as it was wide.

"Why," I asked, "is that a pity?"

"Well, we are going to move to Pretoria next month and I want everything to be addressed to our new place. Would you mind altering it?"

"Not at all," I said with a laugh that sounded like a dry cough.

I tore the form up and brought out a third. When I had reached the address I looked at him expectantly. Huge corrugations had appeared between his eyes. I could see that he was thinking deeply.

"Yes?" I said.

"Now, isn't that silly of me?" he mused. "I've completely forgotten the number of our new house. Can you remember the number, dear?"

"No, Charlie," she said.

"Well," he continued, still apparently ransacking his brains, "I suppose you had better use this address for the time being. We can always change it later."

I wrote down the same address for the second time. I did not laugh in any way any more.

"And now," I said, fear clutching at my heart, "how old are you?"

He looked enigmatic. "I am in my thirty-ninth year."

I wrote down thirty-nine and then paused.

"Does that mean," I swallowed, "that you are thirty-eight?"

"Naturally," he said, as if surprised at my ignorance.

"Would you mind initialling this alteration?" I said, holding out the proposal form with a trembling hand.

"Wouldn't it be better to start a new form?" he said.

"I have only one more form."

"Only one more? That's not many, is it?"

"What is your occupation?" I continued.

"I'm a teacher."

I hesitated.

"You teach at a school?" I asked. I was determined not to be caught this time.

"Yes."

"At an ordinary school for ordinary boys?"

"Oh, yes."

I did not see how there could be any ambiguity here. Resolutely I wrote down his occupation.

"You didn't call me a teacher, did you?" he asked suddenly, when I had finished.

"Yes, I did," I said, without moving my lips.

"I hate being called a teacher. Couldn't you alter it to schoolmaster? A teacher is so often a figure of fun, whereas a schoolmaster has some status, hasn't he, dear?"

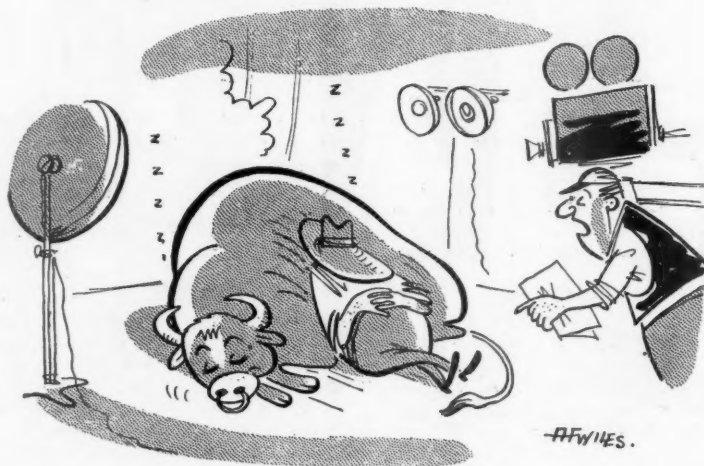
"Yes, Charlie," she said. The scarf was now longer than it was wide.

"It doesn't really matter on a form like this," I said.

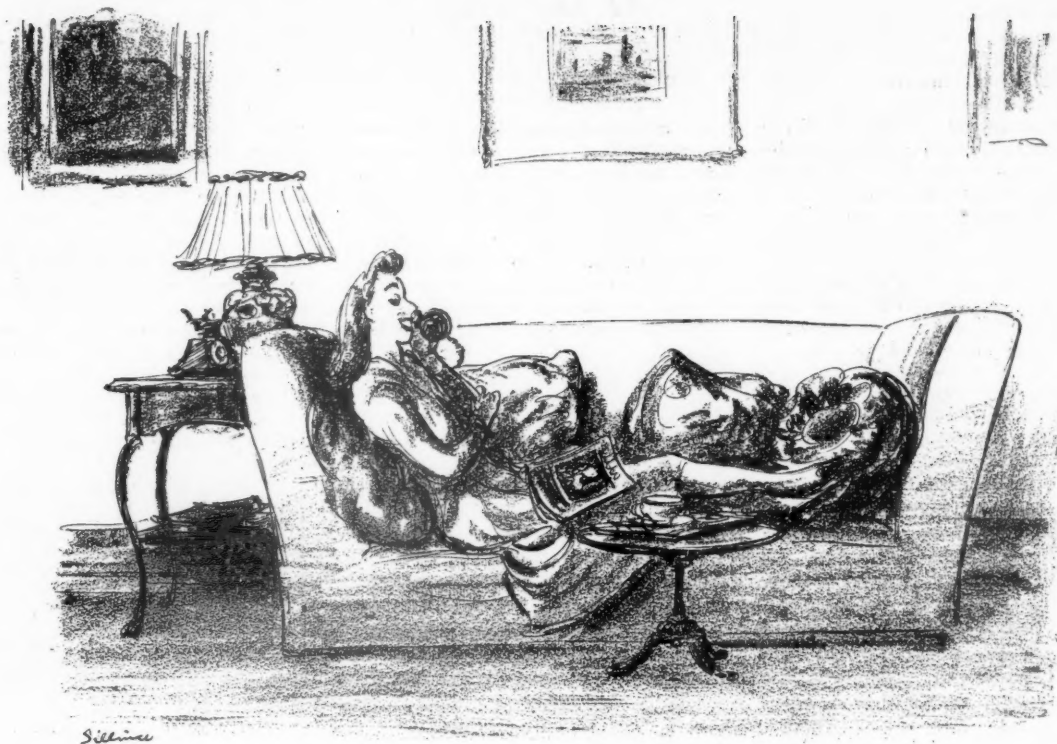
"Well, it may seem a small point to you, but I'd be much obliged if you altered it."

I altered it.

"How do you want to pay your premiums?" I asked.



"O.K., you two—let's have the mad bull scene over again."



"And a very happy one to you, my dear—they say it's going to be worse than nineteen-forty-eight."

"Oh, monthly," he said, immediately. "It's so much more convenient."

I pretended to write it down: he could not see the form from where he sat.

"Wait a bit, though," he said, when he thought I had finished. "Isn't it much cheaper if one pays annually?"

"Yes, one does save quite a bit," I said with some equanimity.

"Well, I'll pay annually then, if you don't mind. I'm sorry you have to make another alteration. Perhaps you had better start a new form."

"No, it's all right," I said. "I have not written in anything yet."

For the first time since we had sat down our eyes met, but his were expressionless.

"Now," I said, feeling slightly better, "what was your last illness?"

"Well, we don't rightly know what it was. It was only the other night. I suddenly got the shivers, like an ague or fever. I lost all control of my limbs. I lay there twitching and jerking. I must have been a horrible sight. We still don't know what it was, do we, dear?"

"No, Charlie," she said. The scarf was now big enough to gag her with.

"I remember my wife saying to me, 'I wonder what it is, Charlie?'"

"What did the doctor say about it?" I asked with my eyes on the carpet.

"Oh, we didn't have a doctor. I don't believe in doctors unless I am very ill. That wasn't much, probably just a slight chill."

"Not a fever?"

"Well, a kind of feverish chill, if you know what I mean."

"No, I don't know what you mean."

"Well, if you had seen me you would understand. It's very difficult to explain."

"So I gather," I said, for quite rightly I no longer felt like a salesman.

"Tell me," I resumed, "what was the last illness for which you saw a doctor?"

"Heart failure."

"Heart failure?"

"Yes, not proper heart failure; it just fluttered. I've got a systolic murmur of the heart," he added with relish.

"You have?"

"Yes, if you keep quiet for a moment you will hear it."

Silence fell. I craned forward and listened intently.

"I can't hear anything," I said.

"You would if you were used to it like we are. Did you hear it, dear?"

"Yes, Charlie," she said. The scarf was now big enough to strangle her with.

"If you have heart trouble it will be difficult to insure you."

"Oh, don't say that. I'm beginning to feel really good about this policy."

"What doctor attended you for your heart trouble?"

"Dr. Plaistowe."

Thrown off my guard by all the clinical details, I wrote it down. He began to make wet noises with his tongue.

"I've given you the wrong name. Dr. Plaistowe treated me for my lungs and kidneys. Dr. Turner is my heart man."

"Have you a stomach man?" I inquired, screwing on the top of my pen.

"No, my stomach has not troubled me for some time. You see, I seldom eat anything, do I, dear?"

"No, Dick—I mean, Charlie," she said.

I rose with what dignity I had left and tore the form to pieces.

"Thank you for the nice evening," said the *tricoteuse*, as I went.

At the Play

High Button Shoes (HIPPODROME)—*Humpty Dumpty* (LONDON CASINO)—*The Snow Queen* (OLD VIC)—*Maskelyne's Christmas Magic* (WHITEHALL)

SOCIOLOGISTS have taken hardly sufficient note of America's peculiar flair for theatrical insanity, for the inspired topsyturvy which builds up until the fever of absurdity eats into us and only the inverted makes sense. Perhaps it is no more than a natural escape from a civilization laying such special emphasis on facts. To go from one of the current pantomimes, haunted rooms and all, to *High Button Shoes*, at the Hippodrome, is like walking out from the tranquillity of a club smoking-room into the very middle of Boat Race Night, and what is astonishing to consider is how so much apparently spontaneous disorder can ever be planned and brought about in cold blood. I suppose iron discipline is at the bottom of it, but another interesting thing about this show is that, for a musical, there is quite a firm backbone of plot.

A rogue binds it together, a smooth-tongued scallywag who graduates from pressing springless watches on the multitude to the more difficult feat of selling mud as real estate. In and out of the suburban home of a nice, ordinary New Brunswick family he flits with the resilience and unexpectedness of a jack-in-the-box, involving its members in his frequent brushes with the whiskered slapstick constabulary of the early screen. His powerful salesmanship of a prehistoric Model T Ford, which comes gleaming and snorting upon the stage (challenging Cavallini at Olympia!), his unorthodox lecture to a ladies' bird-watching society, and his unavailing attempt to dispirit with pessimistic oratory the favourites in a college football game are but some of the high-spots of a headlong evening which swings wildly from such quiet period nonsense as a burlesqued lesson in the tango to large-scale free-for-alls in the manner of the Marx Brothers, where bathing belles, bears and the black sheep of melodrama run triumphantly amuck. 1913 is pictorially a good joke, and the dresses are bright as well as diverting.

Those who saw that excellent American comedian, Mr. LEW PARKER,

a few months ago in *Maid to Measure* will easily picture him as the huckster hero. He has a most likeable personality, and plenty of it, and his solemn way of rolling out a twisted line rather as if he were pitching a marble carefully into the centre of the audience is extremely effective; much of the pace of this production comes from his skilful manipulation. The team behind



(*High Button Shoes*)

EXPENSIVE CHEAP-JACK

Harrison Floy Mr. LEW PARKER
Mr. Pontdue Mr. TOMMY GODFREY

him is also good. Miss KAY KIMBER is a nimble *Mama* with a nice voice, Mr. SIDNEY JAMES a *Papa* of genial authority, and together they score with a song called "Papa, Won't You Dance With Me?" one of several likely to be noised abroad. Mr. JACK COOPER as an honest footballer and Miss HERMENE FRENCH as *Mama's* younger sister tunefully look after romance, Mr. TOMMY GODFREY, whose face should be the subject of a separate article, acts invaluable as Mr. PARKER's personal foil, and special praise goes to Miss JOAN HEAL for her tango-stricken domestic. American musicals heavily

tax the chorus, and here it is smoothly trained in massed precision singing and in eccentric dancing that comes near to ballet.

Gusto, speed and a simple humour which rarely misses fire are the distinguishing marks of a show which doesn't quite come up to *Oklahoma!* but will certainly stay a long time. The end of the first performance was marred by a demonstration of bad manners from aloft, as ungrateful as it was undeserved. Mr. PARKER, who could well afford to do so, ignored it with dignity, and I hope our visitors from across the Atlantic will charitably forgive what was a purely hooligan intrusion.

Pantomime is a specialist job, and it isn't surprising that Mr. VIC OLIVER is not at home as the *King* in Mr. EMILE LITTLER's *Humpty Dumpty* at the London Casino. You feel that unsayable things are on the tip of his tongue, and you feel that he feels this too. There is an air of embarrassed reserve about him, as if he were an uncle who is doing his best to be cheerful, but has only reluctantly agreed to put on fancy dress and is already longing to be out of it. With his face brick-red and his limbs encased in an extraordinary jumble of regal oddments he is droll enough as a figure, but somehow he doesn't make us laugh as he should. As a whole this production—which has very little to do with *Humpty Dumpty*—is not as funny as some of Mr. LITTLER's, but it includes a number of acceptable Christmas plums. As

an amorous, acrobatic postmistress Mr. RICHARD HEARNE lollops about brilliantly, as only he can, and the elderly maiden archness he contrives has to be seen to be believed. The haunted room, where horrible spooks get the better of him and Mr. OLIVER without much difficulty, is just what the psychiatrist ordered. Miss PAT KIRKWOOD makes a swaggering, rollicking principal boy in the best romantic tradition. She understands the business perfectly, and has the voice for it. Those of us who cannot discipline a single trumpet must take off our hats to bagpipe-lunged Mr. VIC HYDE, who



[Humphrey Dumpty]

THIRD-PARTY RISKS

The Wicked Witch . . . MR. DIMITRI VETTER

King Yolk of Eggville . . . MR. VIC OLIVER

Agatha Applepip . . . MR. RICHARD HEARNE

plays four of them at once. That independent creature, PENELOPE the horse, flicks her eyebrows and gnashes her teeth as fetchingly as ever; there is Mr. ERNIE BROOKS, as a mariner, leaning against the gale at impossible angles; while CABOT and DRESDEN turn a dance into a dizzy catherine wheel. Accurate chorus-work by the TILLER GIRLS and the TERRY JUVENILES, the acrobatics of the latter being notably good, holds the show together; and, finally, a plum indeed, little Miss JULIE ANDREWS as *Humpty* treats us to singing incredibly mature for her age.

To be at the Old Vic again, even though it is still convalescent, gave a comforting illusion that life was on its way back to normal. The Young Vic Company had the well-earned honour of reopening the veteran theatre, with HANS ANDERSEN'S *The Snow Queen*, the English version being by SURIA MAGITO and RUDOLF WEIL from a dramatization by EUGENE SCHWARZ. The tale of the boy whose heart is frozen by the wicked Queen of the North and of his rescue by his indomitably unfreezeable girl-friend comes over pretty well, but, to be honest, I found it a little solemn for the time of year. There were few of those great gusts of infant laughter so good

to hear and so simple to evoke, though now and then an amusing pair of ravens touched them off; but on the other hand there was much that was charming, and Mr. PIERRE LEFEVRE, *Storyteller*, Miss JEAN WILSON, *Snow Queen*, Miss CHRISTINE HEARNE, *Gerda*, Mr. JAMES WELLMAN, *Kay*, and Miss JUNE VINCENT all fitted well into the story. The last-named, as a sharp-shooting Eskimo wench, performed the rare magnetic feat of bringing the Wild West into the Far North.

If Mr. JASPER MASKELYNE were suddenly bereft of his strange gifts for sawing women in half, passing them through solid walls of plate-glass and evaporating them from hammocks, he could still command star fees as a universal uncle; for just as remarkable as any of the dazzling magic with which he is now filling the Whitehall is his Pied Piper trick of whistling up on to the stage a mob of delighted children, all of whom are radiantly at home in his benevolent custody. His patter is irresistibly natural, and his marvels as staggering as always to the simple mind. They never fail to take me in, though this year, if I may say so in the smallest voice possible, I had a cynical moment when it occurred to me that perhaps one reason the lady

wasn't really sawn in half was that the saw didn't seem to go right through the box. But what cynicism could possibly survive the ghost-hunt in which, dressed as a fully-graduated bone-rattler, he flushes a colleague and after an exciting chase is himself found to be inside its flapping night-dress? Turning confetti into beer, transposing a bottle and a glass, and gradually undressing a bathing beauty in a poster until for modesty she is obliged to submerge are only some of the astonishing whimsies at the command of Miss JAN GLENROSE. THE GREAT MARLO (a girl of eighteen), though heavily blindfolded, easily penetrates such secrets as the numbers on identity cards and dates written on a board behind her; Mr. LAURIE WATSON is an able ventriloquist and really funny as a marionette whose face is Mr. WATSON'S, and Miss RHODA DIANE'S lightning sketches bring a thunder of applause. This is all of it the very stuff for the junior troops. ERIC.

Family Model

"Never before in the one Car was there such complete comfort for 66 adults, such astonishing ease of parking and garaging, such brilliantly powerful performance."

Advt. in Australian paper.



"Get ready—here come the book tokens again."

Our Booking Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Colleagues of a Civil Servant

THE notion that equal opportunities mean identical ones dies hard. Thanks to two wars, the masculine aims of the Victorian feminists largely succeeded; and it will need another war, Miss HILDA MARTINDALE suggests, before the highest posts in the Civil Service are open to women. *Some Victorian Portraits and Others* (ALLEN AND UNWIN, 10/6) are devoted to those of the writer's circle who fulfilled her own ideals of social service. Yet if we were all socially serviceable there would be no need of social service. As the down-and-out said at the Labour Exchange, "It's por chaps like me as keeps chaps like you, Mr. Blank." The father who envisages his daughter's achieving Miss MARTINDALE'S career—she was a Home Office inspector for thirty years and wound up in the Treasury—would be reluctant, as one of our County Education officers wrote recently, to see his own daughter one of the "female helots" she controls. There is only one home-maker in the writer's "Little Pantheon," an old servant who ended her days in "The Friendly Almshouses" for whose excellent ends the book is written. Its twelve portraits include several Civil Servants and Sir Francis Younghusband, limned in the intimacy of an air-raid shelter. The most memorable are Sir Francis, "an unconventional parson," and the old servant aforesaid.

H. P. E.

The First Earl of Charlemont

G. K. C., who remarked that the palaces of eighteenth-century peers, standing like inaccessible post-offices in vast parks, completed the severance of the aristocracy and the people, would have enjoyed the wit, tolerance and apt

research of Mr. MAURICE JAMES CRAIG's study of an Irish peer, patriot and patron of architecture. The trouble with Ireland has always been the variety of its patriots; and the story of the First Earl of Charlemont starts with one Toby Caulfeild of Great Milton, Oxon, who built a small Jacobean fort in Co. Armagh. His Georgian descendant erected the Casino at Clontarf, now an historical monument: a classical knick-knack like the "Rotundas" in England, but even more unsuited to the climate. *The Volunteer Earl* (CRESSET PRESS, 18/-) has, however, greater claims to fame than his buildings—even though he married solely to prevent his brother from pulling them down. The friend and collaborator of Grattan, he held that an Irishman should live in Ireland; got the peeresses of "this kingdom" seats for the wedding of George III; incurred the odium of his fellow-Protestants by attempting to benefit Papists; and led both in the Volunteer Movement against France. He died in 1799, uncorrupted by those who subsequently brought off the union and still able to say "We are yet a nation."

H. P. E.

Douglas Goldring

In *Life Interests* (MACDONALD, 12/6) Mr. DOUGLAS GOLDRING has collected a number of essays which reflect some of the chief enthusiasms of his long and varied literary career. Possibly by way of contrast he has included a few of his dislikes—an important critic in the early nineteen-twenties, some clever novelists of that time, and so on. It was perhaps hardly worth while to disturb the dust on these faded antipathies; but there is one lively and provocative essay which redeems this section, a whole-hearted onslaught on George Gissing. Mr. GOLDRING'S enthusiasms include poetry, wine, Georgian architecture and travel, especially in France. On all these he writes with the warmth and concrete detail of one whose own first published volume was a book of verse, composed under the melodious influence of Housman before the frame of things was disjointed by the first world war. Flecker was the coming poet in those years, and Mr. GOLDRING devotes the longest and most interesting of his essays to his memories of "the lean and swarthy poet of despair." His relations, some years later, with D. H. Lawrence were less intimate, but have sufficed to furnish material for some vivid glimpses of that uneasy, fragmentary, yet always stimulating man of genius. The poetic, enjoying element in Mr. GOLDRING reveals itself most when he is on his own, in the delightful essays which record his solitary ramblings in Islington and Wapping, in Greenwich and Barnsbury, and his voyage to Southend on the good ship *Crested Eagle*.

H. K.

Atlantic Pursuit

It is likely enough that in the stupendous succession of events which followed those six tense days of May 1941, not only the breath-taking excitement with which the nation waited for news of the search for the German battleship *Bismarck*, but also the tremendous significance of the success or non-success of the chase, have become, in some minds at least, very largely overshadowed by more recent happenings. It is well, therefore, that the whole story should be retold from start to finish, as it has been by Captain RUSSELL GRENFELL, R.N., in his book *The Bismarck Episode* (FABER, 12/6), with all the errors and mistakes, the dogged determination and courage, the rapid and amazing reversals of fortune, the tragedies and the final triumph, which go to make up one of the most dramatic chapters in the whole history of the war. It is impossible to read this epic narrative without being struck by the many

parallels it affords with that other great Atlantic pursuit which led up to the glory of Trafalgar. The spirit of Nelson might well have shared the almost unbearable anxiety of the British Commander-in-Chief when it seemed that his quarry might give him the slip amid the vast and wandering wastes of the Atlantic waters; just as the doughty soul of Captain Keats of the *Superb* might greet across the years the captain of the *Rodney*, which, sorely in need of refitting, and with her machinery "in a most precarious condition," was yet able to play her decisive part in the last great scene of the drama. And, finally, even as the failure of Nelson's chase might have changed the whole course of history, so—if the *Bismarck* had eluded her pursuers—it is at least conceivable that D Day might never have dawned.

C. F. S.

Enjoying Ill Health

Mrs. BETTY MACDONALD, having written one very successful book called *The Egg and I* in which she was funny about chicken-farming, has written another and called it *The Plague and I* (HAMMOND HAMMOND, 10/6) in which her theme is life in a sanatorium for tuberculosis. The inference is obvious and well-founded, but the result is not so jarring as one's first impulse, perhaps, is to feel that it ought to be. Hospitals, after all, are funny. Tragedy lurks in the wings, but comedy is more often on the stage. Nobody who has ever sojourned in one will question the authenticity of Mrs. MACDONALD's amusing picture, even though it is evident that *The Pines* is an institution with a character all its own. Fortunately for suffering humanity, nurses are not always so grim nor patients so ghoulish as some of those she met there. But she met good fellowship too, and responded to it, and her sharply pointed pen is as equal to avenging her on petty tyrant or prophet of woe as it is to depicting in the liveliest detail the portentous trifles constituting the daily round in that curious microcosm of which for eight months she was a member. Of those trifles, pleasant or unpleasant, she spares us few. She has assumed that what interested her will interest others, and that assumption she has justified. Any initial suspicion that so much particularity may grow boring is quite soon discovered to be groundless. Mrs. MACDONALD's own incapacity for boredom is infectious. It probably kept her alive, as it keeps her book.

F. B.

Ballooney

Ballooning, Mr. C. H. GIBBS-SMITH's addition to the King Penguin series, is a model of its kind and wonderful value for half-a-crown; it is amusingly written and in a small space highly informative. The oddest thing about the whole lighter-than-air adventure was the extraordinary hothouse period of development in France at the end of the eighteenth century, when in a few years the balloon passed from a joke to a military weapon used by Napoleon. In 1783 the Montgolfier brothers sent up their first fire-balloon, and only five months later the first human ascent was made from Paris, two intrepid sportsmen persuading Louis XVI to let them go in the place of reluctant criminals he had earmarked for the job. In the same year hydrogen was employed for a flight from the Tuileries, and in 1785 the Channel was crossed by Blanchard, who came so near to hitting the French coast that he felt obliged to jettison his trousers. In England prime honours went to the secretary of the Neapolitan Embassy, but our native pioneer was an Oxford confectioner, James Sadler, hero of many remarkable voyages. The early history of ballooning was rather marred by an unpleasant habit of sending animals aloft, but when an imaginative Madame Poitevin, visiting

this country in 1852, proposed to take off as Europa seated on a bull, she met with an official ban. The opening years of this century were the heyday of ballooning for fun, and it is sad that the aeroplane so quickly killed a sport which by all accounts was full of innocence and charm. Thirty-two plates, fourteen of them in colour and including a Cruikshank and a Rowlandson, add to the entertainment in this delightful little book.

E. O. D. K.

Old Worlds and New

COUNT ROBERT KEYSERLING, nephew of the famous philosopher, has much of the energy and resourcefulness of his ancestor who, returning to the Low Countries penniless from the Third Crusade, went east with some ex-Crusading comrades, founded the city of Riga, and established one of the great Baltic families which flourished down the centuries until the wars and revolutions of the last thirty years scattered them throughout the world. In *Unfinished History* (ROBERT HALE, 12/6) Count KEYSERLING pictures the ease and luxury of his early years, before 1914, "summers . . . on my grandfather's estate in Lithuania, winters in the pomp and uniformed splendour of St. Petersburg." A few years later he was drifting about in British Columbia, working as a lumberjack and a pilchard fisherman, trying his hand at free-lance journalism, saving enough money to go to Vancouver University, and finally returning to Europe as a special correspondent for the British United Press. With friends and relations distributed all over Central Europe, Count KEYSERLING could follow what was happening in the Europe of the post-war decade with a more intimate understanding than his colleagues from the New World. None the less, he does not conceal that in an interview with Hitler in the summer of 1931 he failed to divine the potentialities of the future Führer, and was indeed greatly surprised that so muddled and unimpressive a person should even be considered as a possible leader of Germany. There is much reflection as well as stirring incident in this book which mirrors an exceptionally resilient nature equal to any fate.

H. K.



A Sporting County

AT this season our love for cricket is to be indulged by pleasant reverie before the fire. And when the curtains are drawn, and the lamps are lighted, and the rain that has so often stopped play beats against the windows, I lie back in my arm-chair and muse on my favourite of all the counties—Loamshire.

I do not know who invented Loamshire, but it has for many years now been the mythical eighteenth county in the championship. It has figured in cricket fiction of every kind. What kind of a county is Loamshire?

It is not easy to tell, for *Wisden* knows it not. But I have my own ideas. It is certainly one of the older county clubs, a club against which the young W. G. Grace, still Mr. and not yet Dr., loved to play. In the absence of statistics I should place its formation in the early 1870s, but the Gentlemen of Loamshire must have been playing a great many years earlier. Even to-day, I am sure, Loamshire fields more amateurs than any other county. Its professionals are of the old school—burly, thick-moustached men of forty who take a quart of ale with their lunch, and who address the amateurs as “Zurr”—probably with a tug of the forelock. There is nobody very outstanding among the professionals; there never has been. Loamshire has never produced a Hammond or a Compton. But they are all good, reliable men, men who, season after season, finish with a batting-average of twenty-eight or thirty, or who take their fifty wickets for a shade over twenty-eight runs apiece. Not one has ever gained Test status.

The amateurs, for which Loamshire has always been famous, are a different matter. There are two kinds—the brilliant and the sound. Among the latter I am quite sure we may number Mr. Treherne, Barrie’s “athletic, pleasant-faced young clergyman” of *The Admirable Crichton*. Loamshire surely plays a sporting parson, and Treherne, the Earl of Loam’s son-in-law, cannot have missed his place. He has the Loamshire approach to cricket. Listen:

Lord Brocklehurst. I hear you have got a living, Treherne. Congratulations. Treherne. Thanks.

Lord Brocklehurst. Is it a good one? Treherne. So-so. They are rather weak in bowling, but it’s a good bit of turf.

Most of the Loamshire amateurs are rather more dashing than Treherne, who, one feels, can make a stolid twenty or thirty when it is most

wanted, and turn a pretty analogy on it in the pulpit at the week-end. At one time Loamshire never took the field without at least one phenomenal schoolboy of fifteen. I am now going back some twenty-five years. For all I know, Loamshire may still be continuing this policy of encouraging young talent, but the journals that chronicled those matches have passed from my reading. Usually these schoolboys knocked up a magnificent century in their very first match, to snatch the game out of the fire. Afterwards the Loamshire skipper clapped them on the back and said “Well played, young ‘un! You’ll go to Australia this winter.”

The Loamshire skipper! Always a rather shadowy figure; one cannot quite get hold of him. Wealthy, though, and county—in the other sense—through and through. I should say he hunts in the winter, probably with the pack of which his elder brother is Master. He has thought of standing for Parliament, but is modestly aware he “hasn’t got the brains of these political johnnies.” Undoubtedly he holds notable Cricket Weeks at his country house. He it is who cheerily calls out to the mysterious stranger leaning wistfully over the railings: “Care for a game, sir? Our star batsman’s let us down.” The mysterious stranger then proceeds to—however, his performance does not strictly belong to the annals of Loamshire cricket.

How has Loamshire fared in the county championship? I cannot see them ever heading the table, or even appearing in the Big Six. Halfway down, or a little lower—that is the best I place them. Of course there have been occasions when they have trounced Y-kshire and L-ne-shire—if ever they had five or six of their schoolboy prodigies playing in the same match they would be capable of trouncing the Australians of 1921 or 1948—but I feel they are at their happiest playing the Western Counties.

Which leads us to ask where, geographically, Loamshire may be? Careful study of the map inclines me to locate it between Berkshire and Wiltshire, extending into Gloucestershire on the north-west and Hampshire on the south-east. There is no big city in Loamshire. Their home matches are played on country grounds, and the gates are small, but Loamshire would not have it otherwise. There is one fair-sized county town, which, ignoring topographical limitations, I assert to be Shrewsbury.

Loamshire is the friendliest team in cricket, and the most sporting. They drop points without a thought over a sporting declaration. They have never heard of playing for a draw, and are not interested in heavy-roller tactics. They are spiritually of the last century. They play far into the dusk to give their opponents a chance to knock off the runs, and it is in the dusk I see them now, lit by the glow from my fire. I see them taking the field in their tiny cricket-caps, the green, sunny field a-sparkle with early dew, the “professors” rolling along like amiable bears, the schoolboys eagerly eyeing the immemorial elms over which they will presently loft the mightiest six ever seen on the ground, the stalwart, ruddy-faced skipper grinning with delight as yet another game starts. His thousandth? His two thousandth? No matter. Loamshire cricket goes on for ever. Loamshire is my favourite team.

A Curse on Courts-Martial

or Groans from the Glasshouse

YE fiends of Hell, record the curse Of Private Charlie Cholmondeley.

Since oaths can make my plight no worse,

I will not suffer dolmondeley.

Before a martial court arraigned

For stealing army victuals,

My guns were spiked, my honour stained,

My hopes knocked down like skietuals.

Oh, curse the cook who sensed the fraud,

And curse my nose-y neighbours,

And curse the Court whose harsh awaud Suppressed my gainful leighbours.

The Devil take the G.O.C.,

The Devil take the Colonel,

The Devil take the R.M.P.

To agonies infolonel.

Elysian fields may bloom for me,

Perennially volonel—

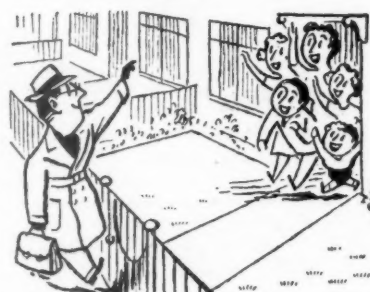
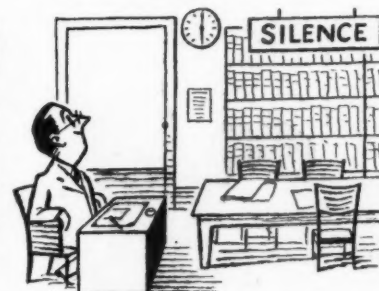
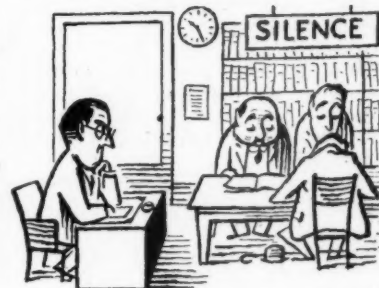
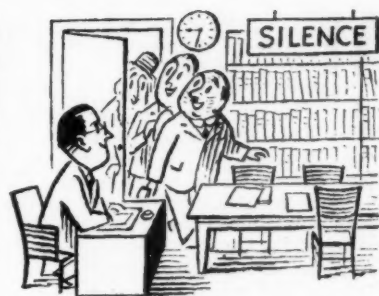
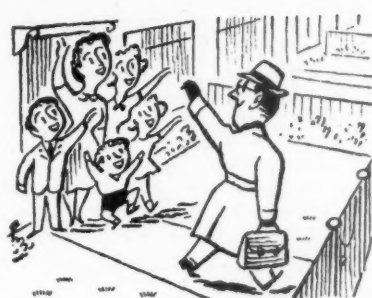
But down with all the Powers that B

To rot in chains etolonel.

“It may well be that there should be a yearly adjustment of the total amount allowed to date for depreciation, free of tax, so as to relate it to the basic allowance, multiplied by the figure of a general wholesale index at the end of the period, divided by the corresponding figure at the beginning. This would certainly be simpler . . .”

“The Glasgow Herald.”

For whom?



The Return of Mlle. Héloïse

"MY daughter," said Mme. Boulot, "is departed. She is no longer with us."

I removed my hat. This was a shock. The previous evening Mlle. Héloïse had apparently been quite normal: she had had the usual violent dispute with M. Albert in the matter of the correct retail price of *vin rosé*, and had, as usual, flirted outrageously with the ancient M. Alphonse. It was sad to think that one so young . . .

"It is life," said Mme. Boulot, heavily. "One moment one is there, the next one is not."

I nodded sadly.

"It is, however, not to tolerate, the blow that my daughter has lanced at me."

This was a little unkind, I thought. So soon after . . .

"It is a question of what blow, Madame?" I asked rather coldly.

"You have not then heard?"

Mme. Boulot can never realize that her clients do not possess her gift of prescience. She was astonished by my ignorance.

"It is a question," she said sternly, "of the respect and obedience due from a daughter to her mother."

This topic ranked as one of Mme. Boulot's favourites, and resignedly I

altered my order from one small vermouth to two large cognacs.

"Last evening," said Mme. Boulot, "the uncle of the fiancé of my daughter Héloïse enters and orders a *fine-à-l'eau*. Héloïse serves it. It is the last in the bottle. 'Descend to the cellar,' I demand of Héloïse, 'and seek another bottle.'"

"Figure to yourself my surprise when she responds: 'Descend rather yourself, Maman, since, as you perceive, I am occupied with the uncle of my fiancé.'"

"I do not dispute. The uncle Aristide is a man of considerable *rentes*, and one day . . . so I descend." She paused dramatically. "But do I descend once? My faith, no. I descend no less than six times, to seek liqueurs which have rested in the cellar since the days of Boulot. For the health, Héloïse dares to say, of the uncle Aristide. Naturally to-day I suffer from a crisis of the nerves."

There was no doubt that she had a strong case.

"But Madame," I said, "in admitting that it was not gentle on the part of Mlle. Héloïse to impose on you in this fashion, can you not pardon one so young and without experience . . ."

"Never. Never in my life," said

Mme. Boulot firmly. "To work like a negress, to sacrifice my health for my daughter's sake, that I will do. But to be humiliated before my clients—this is not to pardon."

At that moment Mlle. Héloïse entered, startling me so badly that I knocked over my glass. She looked slightly penitent, but unmistakably alive. Mme. Boulot folded her arms and looked into space.

"Maman," said Mlle. Héloïse, "I have reflected."

Her mother continued to contemplate the middle distance.

"It was a stupidity on my part," her daughter went on, "to seek employment at the 'Escargot Gris.' One would say rather a pigsty than a café-restaurant."

Mme. Boulot sniffed non-committally.

"I will descend to the cellar, Maman, and arrange the bottles. It is not just—it is not even to imagine—that you should derange yourself with such work."

"Descend then," said Mme. Boulot, "and leave me tranquil."

"Without rancour, Maman?"

"Without rancour."

I left them weeping loudly and happily.



"Bit of a teaser this morning, wasn't it?"

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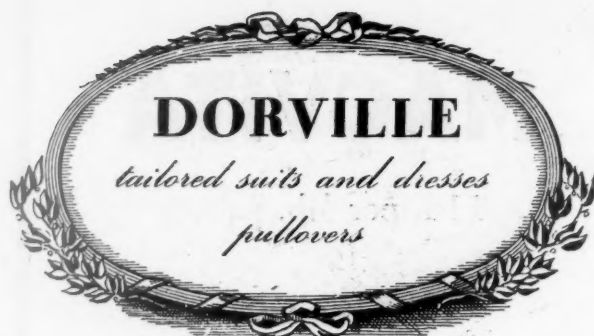
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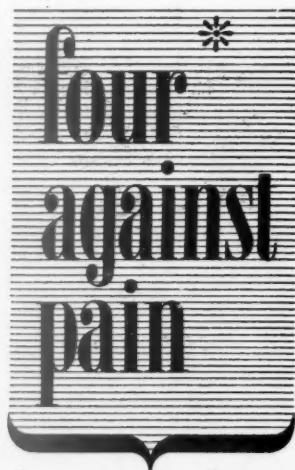
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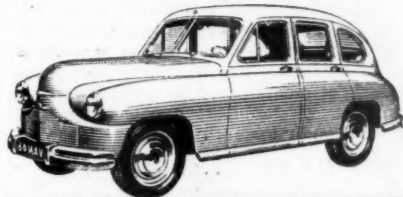


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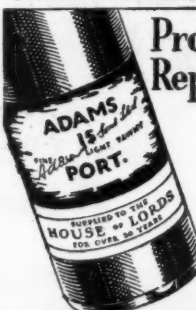
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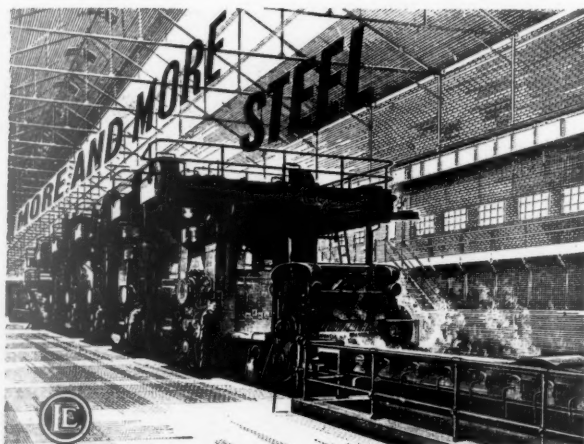
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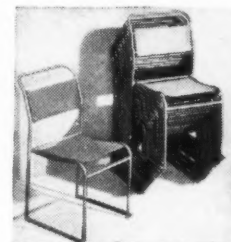


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